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SCHOOL COUNSELOR SELF-ADVOCACY AND TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PREDICTORS OF PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE IN SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Trait Emotional Intelligence as predictors of Professional Quality of Life in school counselors

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Abstract Content: School counselors are integral to the holistic success of students and are needed now more than ever as high rates of youth mental health issues, traumatic events at schools and global crises have become part of every school year. Unfortunately, as with most helping professions, many school counselors are struggling with maintaining a healthy professional quality of life due to chronic stress work environments. School counselors who have higher levels of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and lower levels of compassion satisfaction are more likely to have decreased quality of care for students, decreased self-efficacy, decreased overall wellbeing and, ultimately, a higher rate of attrition from the profession (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Kim & Lambie, 2018).

In an effort to better understand how to prevent compassion fatigue and promote compassion satisfaction in school counselors, this study examined trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue) and school counselor self-efficacy (SCSA) in relation to the professional quality of life subscales. A sample of 194 practicing school counselors in the United States completed an online survey consisting of: a demographic questionnaire; the Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version 5 (Stamm, 2010); the Trait Emotional Intelligence Short Form (Petrides, 2009); and the School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (Clemens, Shipp & Kimbel, 2011) in early 2020. Findings revealed positive significant relationships between the independent variables, TEIQue and SCSA, and compassion satisfaction; and negative significant relationships between the independent variables and the components of compassion fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Regression analyses established that TEIQue and SCSA interact to significantly predict the components of professional quality of life (ProQOL) and that TEIQue is a unique contributor to all three ProQOL subscales. A discussion of the results is presented along with implications for school counseling professionals and future directions for research.

Keywords: school counseling; professional quality of life; self-advocacy; emotional intelligence; burnout; secondary traumatic stress; compassion satisfaction; compassion fatigue

Acknowledgments

I am fortunate to have many people to thank for supporting me through this dissertation, though before I do, I feel it necessary to acknowledge the current global context. I am writing this acknowledgements section in June, 2020, a time in our history marked by feelings of fear, uncertainty, hopelessness and outrage due to the Corona virus pandemic, climate change crises and the ongoing systemic racism plaguing our country and world (for more information and to find out what you can do to change the system go to blacklivesmatter.com). I would like to thank the many individuals and groups who are striving for positive social, economic and environmental change through awareness, activism and education. In my corner of the world, the following individuals and groups have been both supports and inspirations to me in creating positive change, as well as finishing my doctorate.

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Chapter One: Introduction

School counselors are critical leaders in school safety and the holistic success of students. Empirical research demonstrates that school counselors and school counseling programs have positive effects on student outcomes, such as attendance, standardized test scores, college application rates, graduation rates, disciplinary rates, student sense of belonging, student self-efficacy and self-esteem, among others (see ASCA, n.d. for a selection of research articles on the effectiveness of school counseling programs). While the benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program are numerous, the success of a program may be inhibited or supported by the *professional quality of life* (ProQOL) of the school counselor(s) developing and implementing the program.

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) is defined as "the quality one feels [i]n relation to their work as a helper" (Stamm, 2010, p. 8) and is comprised of two constructs: *compassion fatigue* and *compassion satisfaction*. Compassion Fatigue is the negative impact on a helper's wellbeing due to the helper experiencing work-related *burnout* and *secondary traumatic stress* (STS). Previous research has demonstrated that school counselors experience burnout at a greater level than those in other helping professions (Mullen, 2014; Stamm, 2010). School counselors experiencing burnout are more likely to have lower self-efficacy, higher rates of turnover and attrition from the profession, lower overall wellbeing, and decreased delivery of services to students (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Kim & Lambie, 2018). Although there is a gap in research on school counselors experiencing secondary traumatic stress, it has been studied in similar professional fields, such as juvenile justice workers (Smith Hatcher et al., 2011) and school personnel such as teachers, principals and support staff (Borntrager et al., 2012; Koenig, Rodger and Specht 2017) Research on STS in

helping professions indicates that common symptoms of a helper experiencing STS can include: emotional numbing, physical and emotional exhaustion, hypervigilance and avoidance of the workplace (Baird & Kracen, 2006; Lever, Mathis & Mayworm, 2017). Due to the fact that school counseling relies on school counselors being emotionally present with students, it can be inferred that a school counselor experiencing STS would be significantly less effective in their role due to emotional exhaustion and other symptoms of STS. School counselors experiencing higher levels of compassion fatigue (burnout and STS) without sufficient compassion satisfaction to counterbalance the fatigue may be at a higher risk leaving the profession.

Compassion satisfaction is the positive impact on a helper's wellbeing accrued through feeling productive, effective and valued in their work. Compassion satisfaction in school counselors is absent from the extant literature. However, research in this population has identified factors that may contribute to concepts that are similar to compassion satisfaction, such as commitment to the profession and job satisfaction. For example, previous findings indicate that school counselors are more committed to the profession when they have fewer assigned non-counseling duties and are more satisfied in their jobs when they have positive relationships with school administration (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Rayle, 2006).

For school counselors experiencing a lower professional quality of life, introducing ways to cope with compassion fatigue and increase compassion satisfaction may improve school counselors' overall wellbeing and keep them in the profession. Two constructs that may aid in coping with burnout and STS, and promoting compassion satisfaction, are *trait emotional intelligence* and school counselor *self-advocacy*.

Trait emotional intelligence has been linked to improved mental, physical and psychosomatic health (Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010). In the school counselor population specifically, trait emotional intelligence has been positively correlated with mental health (Cejudo, 2016) and leadership skills (Mullen, Gutierrez, & Newhart, 2017), indicating that it could be negatively linked with compassion fatigue and positively linked with compassion satisfaction. Similarly, school counselors who engage in advocating for their role through self-advocacy efforts are able to minimize roll stress and decrease organizational stressors that increase compassion fatigue (Anderson, 2015; Bryant & Constantine, 2006). Additionally, school counselors who self-advocate experience higher levels of self-efficacy which may increase compassion satisfaction (Anderson, 2015). To date, trait emotional intelligence and school counselor self-advocacy have not been studied in relation to one another nor in relation to the ProQOL of professional school counselors.

Statement of the Problem

School counselors are in high demand as social/emotional development, mental health in schools, and school safety have been recognized as critical components in student success. Yet many school counselors experience high chronic stress in their roles which can damage their professional quality of life and may lead to diminished quality of care for students, negative health effects on the school counselor, and possible attrition from the profession (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waak, 2011; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Research in the population of professional school counselors has examined the factors that contribute to burnout, such as role stress, assignment of non-counseling duties and high student-to-school-counselor ratios (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Burnout is a main component of compassion fatigue and negatively affects professional

quality of life. It is possible that many of these factors can be ameliorated through increasing school counselors' trait emotional intelligence and self-advocacy abilities. However, the relationship between the three variables of professional quality of life, school counselor self-advocacy and trait emotional intelligence is unknown. A better understanding of how these constructs may interact with the professional quality of life of school counselors will give direction to professional development and training programs of school counselors on methods to reduce school counselor turnover and improve the efficacy of school counseling programs. The current study aimed to fill these gaps in the literature and offer direction for professional development for school counselors.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following ten research questions.

Research questions one through three: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Professional Quality of Life.

1. What is the relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors?
2. What is the relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and burnout in professional school counselors?
3. What is the relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors?

Research questions four through six: School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Professional Quality of Life.

4. What is the relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors?

5. What is the relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and burnout in professional school counselors?
6. What is the relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors?

Research questions seven through ten: Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy as predictors of Professional Quality of Life.

7. What is the relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Trait Emotional Intelligence in professional school counselors?
8. How do Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy interact to predict Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors?
9. How do Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy interact to predict burnout in professional school counselors?
10. How do Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy interact to predict secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors?

From the above research questions the following research hypotheses were formulated.

Hypothesis 1.

There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 1_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 2.

There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 2_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 3.

There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 3_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 4.

There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 4_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 5.

There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 5_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship School Counselor Self-Advocacy and burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 6.

There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 6_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between School Counselor Self-Advocacy and secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 7.

There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 7_0.

There will be no statistically significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 8.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will interact and significantly predict Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 8_0.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will not interact and predict Compassion Satisfaction in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 9.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will interact and significantly predict burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 9_0.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will not interact and predict burnout in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 10.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will interact and significantly predict secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Hypothesis 10_0.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor Self-Advocacy will not interact and predict secondary traumatic stress in professional school counselors.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used.

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL). "The quality one feels [i]n relation to their work as a helper" (Stamm, 2010, p. 8), composed of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue.

Compassion Satisfaction (CS). The feeling of pleasure, or satisfaction, obtained from "being able to do your work well" (Stamm, 2010, p. 12).

Compassion Fatigue (CF). The negative aspect of ProQOL consisting of two constructs: burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Stamm, 2010).

Burnout (BO). A psychological state characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased performance and motivation resulting from chronic, high stress work environments (Maslach, 2017; Maslach & Schaufeil, 1993).

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). A condition that can occur in helpers from repeated exposure to others' trauma history and has symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,

which negatively impact the helpers' holistic wellbeing and work performance (Figley, 2002; Stamm, 2010).

Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue). Petrides and Furnham defined Trait Emotional Intelligence as, "behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities" (2001, p. 428) from the areas of personality, social intelligence, personal intelligence and ability emotional intelligence including: adaptability; assertiveness; emotional appraisal; emotion expression; emotion management; emotion regulation; impulsiveness; relationship skills; self-esteem; self-motivation; social competence; stress management; trait empathy; trait happiness; trait optimism.

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy (SCSA). For school counselors specifically, School Counselor Self-Advocacy is defined as "the ability to effectively and appropriately communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert information about ideal school counselors' roles to those with the ability to change the circumstances that contribute to the problem or inequity" (Clemens, Shipp, & Kimbel, 2011, p. 34).

Defined terms will be bolded throughout the following pages to aid the reader.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to professional school counselors employed at any level K-12 school(s) in the U.S. during the academic school year of 2019-2020.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because there is no existing research to date that examines the relationships between **trait emotional intelligence**, **school counselor self-advocacy**, and **professional quality of life** in school counselors. This study aimed to fill these gaps in the research. Findings of this study may inform professional development of school counselors in relation to improving their **professional quality of life**. Evidence of a predictive relationship

between **school counselor self-advocacy**, **trait emotional intelligence**, and **compassion satisfaction** and **compassion fatigue**, supports change efforts in the training of future school counselors and ongoing professional development of practicing school counselors. **Burnout** in school counselors reduces the efficacy of their programs, decreases overall wellbeing and can lead to attrition from the profession (DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Lambie, 2007; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Therefore, there is merit in increasing the understanding of the elements that protect against **compassion fatigue** and strengthen **compassion satisfaction** in school counselors to reduce attrition from the profession and increase effectiveness of services delivered to students.

As with all research, this study was born from my personal experiences working in the field of school counseling. Over the last six years I have met and worked with dozens of school counselors, counselor educators and school counseling supervisors across the nation and what I came to know is twofold: 1) the field of school counseling is filled with dedicated, caring, passionate professionals; and 2) these professionals are struggling to maintain a healthy professional quality of life and are experiencing compassion fatigue in high numbers. As a school counseling professional, I wanted to better understand how I can tailor my school counseling professional development offerings to equip school counselors with the skills and abilities needed to promote compassion satisfaction and prevent compassion fatigue and keep these dedicated professionals healthy in their careers. The findings from this study provided considerable direction in achieving that goal.

Summary

School counselors play a critical role in the social/emotional, career and college readiness and academic success of students. Incidences of school violence and the pervasiveness of mental

health needs in young people have never been higher in the American education system leading to a high demand for school counselors. However, the school counseling profession is plagued by high occurrences of chronic stress due to both individual factors and organizational factors. School counselors who are ill-equipped to protect against the effects of chronic stress and/or change organizational factors that contribute to high stress are at risk for experiencing **compassion fatigue** which can have drastic negative impacts on their wellbeing, work performance and ability to stay in the profession. **Trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** may provide tools for school counselors to inoculate against **compassion fatigue** and increase **compassion satisfaction**, improving their overall **professional quality of life**.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

School counselors play an integral role in the comprehensive development of students in PK-12 schools. According to the American School Counseling Association's National Model for school counseling, comprehensive development includes mindsets and behaviors necessary to social/emotional learning, academic success and college and career readiness (2012). School counselors assess, develop, implement and manage school counseling programs to address students' developmental needs on a multi-tiered system of support that includes interventions for the entire student body (tier 1), groups of students (tier 2), and individual students (tier 3). Interventions at the three tiers are informed by data, are evidence-based and utilize school counselors' knowledge of counseling, education, and community health theories. The positive influence of school counselor interventions on student outcomes in the academic, social/emotional and career and college readiness arenas has been well documented over the last thirty years (Borders & Drury, 1992; Carrell & Hoekstra, 2014; Whiston, Eder, Rahardja, & Tai, 2007; Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Whiston & Quinby, 2009).

Now more than ever, school counselors are needed as the magnitude and pervasiveness of mental health issues faced by youth has both increased and become more visible in recent years. In 2010 a U.S. national study on the lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in young people found that one in four or five youth experience a severe mental health impairment and/or distress by the age of 18 (Merikangas, et al.). The top occurring conditions were anxiety disorders (31.9%), behavior disorders (19.1%), mood disorders (14.3%), and substance use disorders (11.4%); the research team also found that nearly 40% of youth who met criteria for one class of disorder also met criteria for another class of disorder and that children began showing symptoms of a disorder as early as age six. Further, research into the negative physical, mental

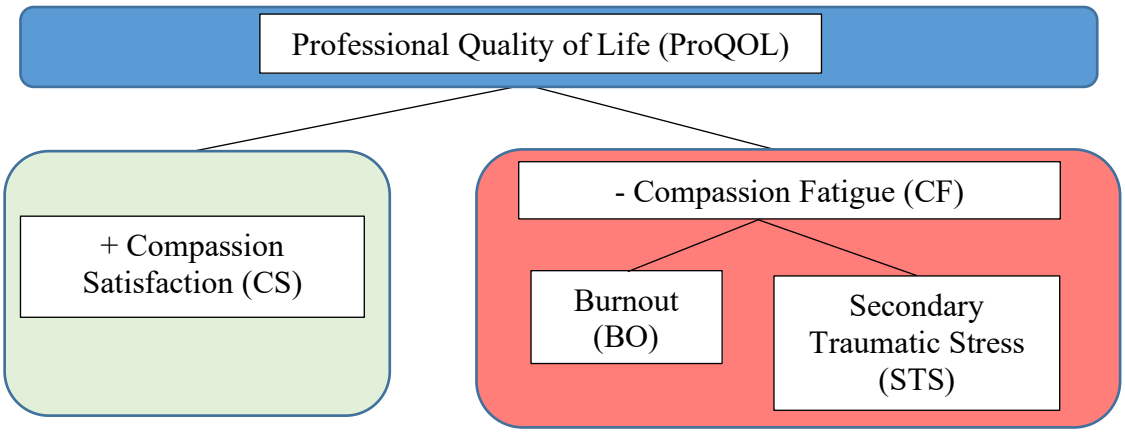
and social/emotional lifetime effects of childhood trauma has underscored the need for mental health prevention and early intervention in the schools (Felitti, et al., 2019; Koss & Marks, 1998). It is clear that the need for school counselors is critical; however, the demands on a school counselor are high and many work in chronic stress environments. This type of work environment can negatively impact the school counselor's **professional quality of life (ProQOL)**. A school counselor who is experiencing lowered **ProQOL** may be less effective in their role in helping students cope with mental health concerns and providing services that lead to positive student outcomes in the areas of academic success, social/emotional development, and career/college readiness (Cervoni & Delucia-Waack, 2011; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). These detrimental effects can also lead to school counselors leaving the profession all together, and creating shortages across the country; therefore, it is vital to understand how to help school counselors maintain a **professional quality of life** that sustains them in their career.

Professional Quality of Life

Professional quality of life is the overall feeling a helping professional has about their work (Stamm, 2010). The overall **ProQOL** of an individual is influenced by two constructs: **compassion satisfaction,** the positive aspects of helping professions and **compassion fatigue**, the negative aspects of helping professions. **Compassion fatigue** is further defined as being the resulting combination of a helping professional's level of **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**. Figure 1 is a representation of the components of **ProQOL.**

Figure 1

Professional Quality of Life Components



Note. Adapted from Stamm, 2010.

Compassion Fatigue

Helping professionals, like school counselors, are at risk for experiencing **compassion fatigue** which negatively influences their **professional quality of life**. **Compassion fatigue** is comprised of two responses to work-place stressors: **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**.

Burnout

Burnout is a psychological state resulting from chronic, high job-related stress, specifically when a helping professional cannot meet their needs, nor those of their clients, due to lack of resources in a high-pressure environment (Maslach & Schaufeil, 1993; Maslach, 2017). It differs from simple stress, which occurs in most work places, in that **burnout** is chronic and, as Brill conceptualized, accompanied by a "breakdown in adaptation accompanied by chronic malfunctioning" (as cited in Maslach & Schaufeil, 1993, p. 10). **Burnout** is associated with a myriad of symptoms that can compromise the physical and mental health of helping professionals and negatively impact their occupational motivation and performance (Freudenberger, 1990; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The concept of **burnout** has been researched extensively since the 1980s and many models have been developed to describe the antecedents, processes and symptoms.

Professionals experiencing **burnout** can be affected in all facets of their lives and the condition can be presented with physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual symptoms. Physical symptoms of burnout cam include low energy, chronic fatigue, sleep difficulties, headaches, increased susceptibility to illness, and physical weakness (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach & Schaufeil, 1993). **Burnout** can manifest cognitively as stereotyping and depersonalization, cynicism, attention difficulties, and negative attitudes towards clients, work and self (Friedman, 1996; Lambie, 2007; Linden, Keijsers, Eling, Schaijk, 2005; Maslach, 2003). The emotional toll **burnout** has on helping professionals is substantial and may include feelings of depression, helplessness, anxiety, hopelessness, guilt, and entrapment (Lee, Cho, Kissinger, & Ogle, 2010; Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Steinhardt, Smith Jaggars, Faulk, & Gloria, 2011). Behavioral symptoms can include absenteeism, aggressiveness, changing jobs, substance abuse and leaving one's profession (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Spiritually, **burnout** can present as a loss of faith, meaning and purpose; feelings of alienation and estrangement; despair; and changes in religious beliefs, affiliations and values (Grosch & Olsen, 1994; Hardiman & Simmonds, 2013).

While the symptoms of **burnout** are numerous, it is generally agreed upon that the concept can be characterized by three elements identified by Maslach and colleagues: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) depersonalization and (3) reduced effectiveness and performance (Maslach, 2003; Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1986; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach & Schaufeil, 1993). Emotional exhaustion is a feeling of being depleted and no longer able to give of oneself to clients at a psychological level. The exhaustion dimension of **burnout** is explained by Maslach and colleagues as: "within the human services, the emotional demands of the work can exhaust a service provider's capacity to be involved with, and responsive to, the

needs of service recipients" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 403). As theorized by Maslach et al., a helping professional experiencing emotional exhaustion attempts to make their work more manageable by distancing themselves from their clients through depersonalization, or seeing their clients as objects rather than unique and valued people. When a helping professional is depersonalizing clients and is emotionally depleted, the quality and effectiveness of care provided deteriorates significantly which can negatively affect the professional's self-efficacy, engagement in the work, and possibly lead to client harm (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). **Burnout** in the counseling professions has been studied extensively and the reported prevalence varies widely. It is estimated that between 21-67% of counseling professionals experience **burnout** (Lambie, 2007; Morse, Salyers, Rollins, Monroe-Devita, & Pfahler, 2012).

Burnout is often prevalent in work environments where the demands of the job are high but the resources to meet the demands are low (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). This is often the case for school counselors and the previous studies have reported the incidence of **burnout** in school counselors to be between 19.2-89% as school counselors are often (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Shaufeli, 2001; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wachter, Clemens, & Lewis, 2008). Many studies have noted that school counselors' experience of **burnou**t varies from clinical mental health counselors in that school counselors typically have higher levels of emotional exhaustion but lower levels of depersonalization as compared with clinical mental health counselors (Anderson, 2015; Gnilka, Karpinski, & Smith, 2015; Lambie, 2007). True to the model of **burnout** in other helping professions, school counselors experiencing **burnout** provide fewer direct student services, including individual and group counseling and curriculum delivery (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Consequently, their programs are less effective and their

sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction decrease which can lead to them leaving the profession (DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016)

Secondary Traumatic Stress

The second component of **compassion fatigue** is **secondary traumatic stress (STS)**. **STS** has been used interchangeably with the related concept of vicarious trauma as they both address helping professionals' reactions to exposure to a client's trauma history. However, the two concepts differ in their emphasis; vicarious trauma describes the effects on the helpers' cognitive schema while **STS** relates to the experienced symptoms (Jenkins & Baird, 2002; Pearlman & Mac Ian 1995). Due to the confusion between the two concepts, research on the effects of trauma work on helping professions has used the terms interchangeably. This study will use the term **secondary traumatic stress** as this is used in the measurement of Professional Quality of Life.

STS arises from intense or repeated exposure to clients' traumatic stories. **STS** has symptoms that mimic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); in essence, helpers experience the client's trauma as if they experienced the trauma themselves (Baird & Kracen, 2006; Figley, 2002; Stamm, 2010). Symptoms of **STS** parallel PTSD symptoms including intrusion of unwanted thoughts relating to the trauma; avoidance of subject matter connected to the trauma; physiological arousal such as, increased heart rate and shortness of breath; distressing emotions; and functional impairment (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004; Figley, 1995; McCann & Pearlman, 1990). As with **burnout**, professionals experiencing **STS** have reduced efficacy in their work, decreased overall well-being, increased disengagement, depression and mood swings and turnover in the workforce (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004; Figley, 2002; Lawson, Caringi, Gottfried, Bride, & Hydon, 2019).

Although **STS** has not been studied in the school counseling population, in the words of Lawson and colleagues, "every professional educator and school employee who interacts with and tries to help traumatized young people is vulnerable" (2019, p. 423). Given that over two thirds of youth experience at least one traumatic event by the time they are 16 and that a national study of ASCA members (N = 174), found that 72.4% of school counselors reported exposure to traumatic events on an often, frequent or everyday basis, it is likely that the frequency of **STS** in school counselors is higher than average (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2007; Rumsey, 2017). In addition, Motta (2012) pointed out that professionals who frequently encounter trauma stories and who have little control over their schedules and caseloads, as is the case with school counselors, are more likely to develop symptoms of secondary traumatic stress.

While **STS** has not been studied extensively in the school counseling population, it has been examined in other professions that work with traumatized youth. In a study of 118 juvenile justice education workers 61% of participants reported having intrusive thoughts about their work, 36.4% reported experiencing psychological distress due to their work and 32.1% reported experiencing a negative physiological reaction in response to reminders about their work with traumatized youth. Additionally, 55% of participants met two of the three core diagnostic criteria for PTSD with 39% meeting all three (Smith Hatcher et al., 2011). **STS** has also been studied in public school personnel. Borntrager and colleagues (2012) conducted a study on the prevalence of **STS** in school personnel with a sample of 229 participants and found that nearly 75% of participants had elevated STS scores on two separate measures. Similarly, Koenig, Rodger and Specht (2017) found that 70.3% of educators (n = 64) reported trauma-like symptoms and 43.2% were experiencing symptoms severe enough to warrant clinical intervention. Symptoms of **STS** in educators may start with disengagement from their work and the youth they serve and can

ultimately be the underlying reason educators leave the profession (Caringi et al. 2015; Holme, Jabbar, Germain, & Dinning, 2018; Rangel, 2018)

Compassion fatigue, comprised of **STS** and **burnout**, is a work-stress condition experienced by some school counselors due to the high demands and low resources of their work, in addition to frequently encountering trauma stories. Workplace stress has been shown to be a negative predictor of career satisfaction and commitment in school counselors (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016) and is detrimental to the professionals' holistic wellbeing (Baird & Kracen, 2006; Figley, 2002; Stamm, 2010). On the other hand, **compassion satisfaction** is the pleasure derived from work as a helper (Stamm, 2010) and may improve career satisfaction and commitment.

Compassion Satisfaction

Compassion satisfaction positively influences **professional quality of life** and is the feeling of pleasure, or satisfaction, obtained from performing helping work effectively and feeling purposeful in one's work (Stamm, 2010). Professionals who are more satisfied with their work are more likely to stay in the profession and experience greater holistic wellness (Connolly & Myers, 2003; Hamermesh, 2001). As mentioned above, school counselors who are experiencing **compassion fatigue** provide less direct services with students and decreased efficacy of their programs. Therefore, it makes sense that a school counselor who has higher levels of **compassion satisfaction** may interact with students more, have higher self-efficacy and see greater positive student outcomes overall from their program. However, **compassion satisfaction** has not received the attention of researchers as **compassion fatigue** has and there is no research specifically on **compassion satisfaction** in school counselors.

Factors Influencing School Counselors' Professional Quality of Life

Unfortunately, there has been little research on **professional quality of life (ProQOL)** in school counselors. However, factors that contribute to **burnout (BO)** and thus, **compassion fatigue (CF)** in school counselors have been identified and it can be inferred that they also influence **compassion satisfaction (CS)** and overall **ProQOL**. For example, one factor that is positively correlated with **burnout** in school counselors is a high student-to-school-counselor ratio; therefore, it would make sense that a school counselor with a ratio closer to the 250:1 recommended by ASCA would have higher **compassion satisfaction**. The factors affecting school counselor **ProQOL** can be categorized into individual and organizational factors (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Figure 2 depicts individual and organizational factors influencing the components of **ProQOL**.

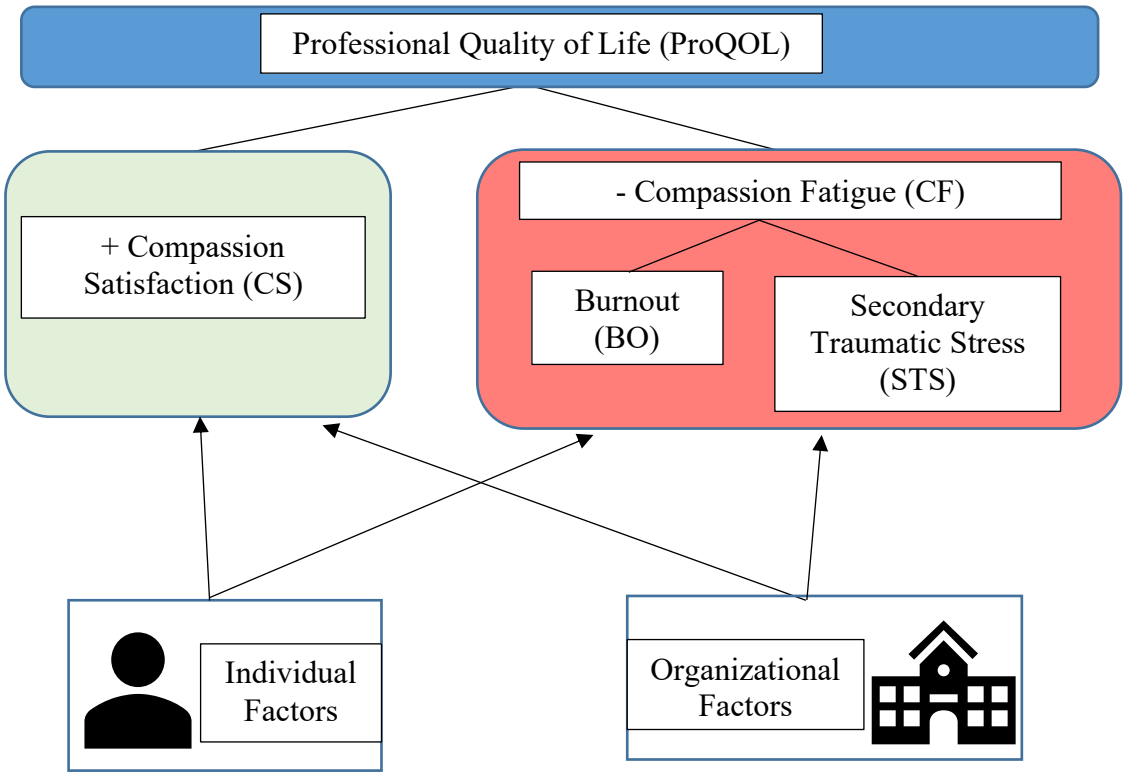


Figure 2

Individual and Organizational Factors Influencing Professional Quality of Life Components

Individual Factors

The individual factors relating to **ProQoL** in school counselors include aspects of the school counselor's intrapersonal traits and social health. Intrapersonal traits studied include: ego maturity, grit, altruism, self-efficacy, and stress coping style.

Ego maturity as described by Loevinger (1976) is a fundamental aspect of an individual's personality and encompasses character development, cognitive style, interpersonal style and conscious preoccupations. Mental health counselors with higher ego maturity are more self-aware, adaptive and empathic (Crarlozzi, Gaa, & Lieberman, 1983; Lambie, 2007). In a study of 218 school counselors, Lambie (2007) found that school counselors with higher levels of ego maturity were more likely to have greater feelings of personal accomplishment. Lambie also concluded that counselors with higher levels of ego development depersonalize their clients less and maintain positive feelings towards their career.

Grit is a stable, non-cognitive trait that is defined as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Although grit has some overlap with the Big Five personality trait conscientiousness (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) it has the unique elements of consistency and endurance of interest in a goal and determination to meet the goal even when faced with difficulties (Duckworth et al., 2007). Mullen and Crowe (2018) found that school counselors (M = 3.83, SD = .56) have statistically significantly higher grit scores than a general sample of adults (M = 3.4, SD = .7), $t(1,882) = 10.47$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .11$. In their study they also examined the relationship between school counselors' grit, stress and **burnout**. Results indicated that school counselors with higher grit had less stress (r = -.28, $p < .001$) and **burnout** (r = -.22, $p < .001$) with a small to medium effect size.

Altruism is a key characteristic of counselors and is influential in one's desire to enter the helping professions (Byrne, 2008; Corey, Corey, & Callahan, 2007; Rogers, 1957). Altruism is "behavior motivated by the concern for others or by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards, or the desire to avoid punishment or sanctions" (Eisenberg et al., 1999, p. 1360). Limberg, Lambie, and Robinson (2016) surveyed 437 practicing school counselors in the U.S. to examine the directional relationship between school counselors' levels of altruism and **burnout**. They found that the level of altruism school counselors demonstrated had a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion (standardized coefficient = -.56) and depersonalization (standardized coefficient = -.93) and a positive relationship with personal accomplishment (standardized coefficient = .54). Therefore, school counselors with higher levels of altruism are less likely to experience **burnout**.

Self-efficacy contributes to the motivation behind performing the altruistic act; in other words, if a person believes they can do something well, they will be more likely to continue to engage in the act. School counselors who believe they are effective in their role caring for students and feel competent doing so, will likely have higher motivation to engage in the work and have higher job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Limberg, Lambie, & Robinson, 2016; Wachter et al., 2008). Limberg and colleagues (2016) found that self-efficacy had substantial influence on emotional exhaustion (31.36% of variance, large effect size) and personal accomplishment (29.16% of variance, large effect size).

Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) examined how school counselors' stress coping styles contributed to and predicted **burnout**. To assess stress coping style they used the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (Endler & Parker, 1999), which measures three coping styles: task-oriented coping, emotion-oriented coping, and avoidance-oriented coping. People who

mainly use the task-oriented coping style respond to stressful situations by focusing on problems directly at hand. Those who use emotion-oriented coping focus on the emotions brought on by stressful situations. The avoidance-oriented coping style describes individuals who try to avoid current and future stressful situations in their lives. Wilkerson and Bellini found that emotion-oriented coping was the only stress coping style that was significantly associated with emotional exhaustion ($r = .53$, $p < .01$), depersonalization ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) and personal accomplishment ($r = -.57$, $p < .01$). This suggests that school counselors who primarily attempt to cope with stress through focusing on the resulting emotions are at greater risk of developing symptoms associated with **burnout**.

A critical aspect of a school counselor's job is collaborating with other school staff, professionals, families and community members (ASCA 2019; ASCA, 2016; ASCA 2012). Not only do counselors need to collaborate to be effective in their roles, they also need the support from colleagues to maintain wellness (Granello, 2001; Young & Lambie, 2007). Social health refers to the sense of mattering and collective self-esteem a school counselor has with their profession, the quality of relationships with colleagues and administration.

Collective self-esteem differs from individual self-esteem, or how one feels about themselves, in that collective self-esteem is one's feelings of identification with the social group they belong to (Bettencourt & Dorr, 1997). In a study of 533 school counselors, Butler and Constantine (2005) found that the overall variance in **burnout** subscales of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment was accounted for by collective self-esteem (Pillai's trace = .08, F (12, 1584) = 3.48, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_m = .03$). In other words, a school counselor who has a sense of pride in their profession, feels like they belong in the profession and has a sense of comradery with other school counselors is less likely to experience **burnout**.

A sense of mattering is the belief that one is an important part of the world and their community (Elliott, Kao, & Grant, 2004). Those who do not feel they matter experience decreased self-esteem and increased feelings of isolation and depression, which can be devastating to their holistic wellness (Elliot, Colangelo, & Gelles, 2005; Elliot et al., 2004). Rayle (2006) looked at the school counselor's sense of mattering, job stress and job satisfaction in 388 school counselors in the United States. Rayle found that sense of mattering was positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) and negatively correlated with job stress ($r = -.51$, $p < .001$). Additionally, Curry and Bickmore (2012) conducted a qualitative exploration of novice school counselors' sense of mattering and found that supportive relationships with administration, teachers, and other school counselors were critical in novice school counselors' sense of mattering.

Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) found that the professional relationship between school counselors and teachers was significantly associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Consultation and supervision from other school counselors is also likely to positively impact **professional quality of life**. McCarthy and colleagues (2010) found that school counselors with higher access to other school counselors experienced lower levels of job stress. Similarly, Moyer (2011) reported findings indicating that school counselors with more supervision from other school counselors experienced less **burnout**. Finally, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that supervision of either a district school counseling leader or a school counseling peer were both significant ($p < .05$) contributors to career satisfaction.

Perhaps the most widely studied professional relationship in school counseling literature is that of the relationship between school counseling professionals and school administrators. A

collaborative relationship with administrators is critical to developing and implementing comprehensive and effective school counseling programs (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008; Perusse, Goodnough, & Bouknight, 2007; Rock, Remley, & Range, 2017). In addition, researchers have found that support from administration was associated with lower levels of job stress (McCarthy et al., 2010) and lower **burnout** (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014) amongst school counselors. It makes sense that the relationship between school counselor and administrators has been well studied in the field as administration has considerable influence over organizational factors that impact school counselor **professional quality of life**.

Organizational Factors

The school counseling profession has undergone considerable change and growth in the last 30 years in response to both the shift in education towards development of the whole child and the growing need for mental health support in schools. Unfortunately, this rapid growth of the role of the school counselor has also led to confusion about the professional duties of the school counselor and appropriate school counselor-to-student ratio.

Role stress in school counselors involves role ambiguity, incongruence and conflict (Freeman & Coll, 1997). Based on role theory developed by Kahn and colleagues (1964), role stress occurs when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent, confusing, and conflicting. Individuals experiencing role stress typically have higher levels of stress, are less effective in performing their role and are more dissatisfied with their work (Kahn et al., 1964; Freeman & Coll, 1997). The original role theory proposed by Kahn et al. (1964) contained role ambiguity and role conflict. Freeman and Coll (1997) explored role stress in high school

counselors using the Role Questionnaire (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) and found three distinct factors of role stress in their analysis: role ambiguity, role incongruity and role conflict.

Role ambiguity is a lack of clear expectations associated with the role (Cervoni, & Delucia-Waack, 2011; Freeman & Coll, 1997; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Culbreth and colleagues (2005) examined role stress among 512 school counselors in the U.S. and found that role ambiguity significantly predicted role stress. Role incongruity refers to a situation in which an employee is tasked with completing unnecessary tasks and/or completing them in an ineffective way due to lack of resources needed (Freeman & Coll, 1997). Wilkerson (2009) surveyed 198 school counselors in the U.S. to explore the relationship between role stress and **burnout** and found that role incongruity significantly contributed to higher levels of emotional exhaustion and lower levels of personal accomplishment. Relatedly, role conflict which occurs when multiple roles are expected yet, compliance with one makes it more difficult to comply with another (Cervoni,et al., 2011; Freeman & Coll, 2007; Kahn et al., 1964). Maslach and Schaufeil (1993) noted that role conflict is an antecedent to **burnout**. Wilkerson's 2009 study of role stress and **burnout** found that role conflict significantly contributed to emotional exhaustion in school counselors.

One contributor to roll stress that school counselors often encounter is the assignment of duties that are not within the scope of school counseling as outlined by ASCA (2012; 2016). In a study of 175 school counselors, Cervoni and colleagues (2011) found that assignment of non-counseling duties was a significant predictor of job satisfaction ($r = -.539$, $p < .001$) and accounted for 28% of the variance. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found a significant positive correlation between career satisfaction and appropriate duties ($r = .14$, $p < .01$) and a significant negative correlation between career satisfaction and inappropriate duties ($r = -.185$, $p < .01$).

Appropriate duties were also a significant predictor of high career satisfaction and inappropriate duties were a significant predictor of low career satisfaction (medium effect size). Likewise, there was a significant correlation ($p < .05$) between career commitment and appropriate duties ($r = .08$, $p < .05$). Additionally, school counselors planning to continue in the profession compared with those who planned on leaving the profession, rated themselves statistically significantly higher on appropriate duties and lower on inappropriate duties assigned.

Another well-researched roll stress contributor is student-to-school counselor ratio. School counselor-to-student ratio contributes to the effectiveness of school counselors in their role and the overall success of their program (Baker & Gerler, 2008). As noted by Schmidt, "the number of counselors hired in a school counseling program makes a difference in the quantity and quality of services offered" (2008, p. 100). Considering the breadth and complexity of designing a comprehensive school counseling program that meets the academic, career and college readiness, and social/emotional needs of students, ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 students to one school counselor. The National Association for College Admission Counseling and ASCA reported on student-to-school-counselor ratio in each state from the 2015-16 school year. The report showed that of the 50 U.S. states, three had ratios at or below the recommended ratio of 250:1; the majority of states (37) had ratios between 250-499:1; seven states had ratios of 500-700:1; and four states reported ratios between 700-1000 students to one school counselor. Researchers have found that high student-to-school counselor ratios correlate with higher **burnout** rates both in the U.S. (Bardoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Feldstein, 2000) and internationally (Gunduz, 2012). In fact, Bardhoshi and colleagues (2014) found that school counselors working in a school with a high caseload (>400) have increased levels of **burnout**, regardless of the amount of non-counseling duties assigned.

The complexity and number of individual and organizational factors that are associated with both **compassion satisfaction** and **compassion fatigue** begs the question: what traits or skills do school counselors have, or can obtain, that can reduce **compassion fatigue** and increase **compassion satisfaction**? **Trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** skills may be two answers as they have both been shown to have positive relationships with individual and organizational factors affecting school counselor **professional quality of life**.

Trait Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was first introduced in an unpublished dissertation by Payne in 1986 and then further developed and researched by Salovey and Mayer (1990). In the mid 1990s the concept gained public attention and became a popular term with the publication of *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman in 1995. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original definition of EI entailed: (a) the appraisal and expression of emotions; (b) regulation of emotions; and (c) using emotions to inform one's behaviors and thoughts. Through further research they refined and expanded the definition to: "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth." (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 5). As the concept became popular both in the scientific and public awareness, the need to devise a way to measure the construct became apparent (Bar-On, 1997; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Schutte et al., 1998). Though many assessments were developed to measure EI, Petrides and Furnham pointed out that the development of the assessments "did not fully consider the fundamental psychometric distinction between measures of typical and maximum performance" (2001, p. 426). For example, some measures used self-report (typical performance) measuring self-perceived abilities and behaviors, while others used

test items with correct and incorrect answers (maximum performance), measuring actual abilities (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). In an effort to ensure clear operationalized measurement of the construct of EI, Petrides and Furnham (2001) proposed a differentiation of **trait emotional intelligence** and ability EI, in which **trait emotional intelligence** is measured and investigated within a personality framework and ability EI is measured with maximum-performance and studied with respect to psychometric intelligence. **Trait emotional intelligence**, defined by Petrides and Furnham (2001), "encompasses behavioural dispositions and self-perceived abilities" (p. 426); it is a way of looking at EI as a "constellation of dispositions and self-perceived abilities rather than as a class of cognitive-emotional abilities" (p. 427). **Trait emotional intelligence** is comprised of personality dispositions related to emotion (Goleman, 1995), and self-perceived abilities from social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920), personal intelligence (Gardner, 1983), and ability EI (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Therefore, **trait emotional intelligence** is a global and more comprehensive measure of EI as compared with ability EI.

Many studies have examined the relationship of **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)** to factors that influence **professional quality of life (ProQOL)**. Oboyle and colleagues (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of **TEIQue** and job performance and concluded that **TEIQue** has strong positive effects on job performance. **Trait emotional intelligence** has also been shown to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction and flourishing (Schutte & Loi, 2014), a negative relationship with **burnout** and job-related stress (Mikolajcza, Menil, & Luminet, 2007), and a positive relationship with work engagement (Akhtar, Boustani, Tsivrikos, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015). In addition, Zeidner and colleagues found a negative relationship between **TEIQue** and **compassion fatigue** (2012). Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) examined the

relationship between **TEIQue** and **burnout** in mental health counselors (N = 539) and found that **TEIQue** is a significant negative predictor of **burnout** (r = -.62, p < .001; 35% of variance explained).

There is minimal research on **TEIQue** in school counselors. However, based on the findings previously outlined, it is likely that **TEIQue** would have a positive relationship with **professional quality of life**, especially since school counselors' **burnout** tends to be mostly due to emotional exhaustion (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). School counselors with higher levels of **TEIQue** may also have better social health and self-efficacy, positively affecting their **compassion satisfaction**. **Trait emotional intelligence** has also been strongly linked with leadership skills (Petrides et al., 2016) which may help school counselors advocate for their roles reducing roll stress.

School Counselor Self-Advocacy

Advocacy is such a central part of the school counseling profession that Borders suggested that the terms "school counselor" and "advocate" could be used interchangeably (2000). Likewise, Trusty and Brown contend that "advocacy is inherent in everything school counselors do" (2005, p. 260). Although these statements are reductionistic in describing the work of a school counselor, they underscore the importance of school counselors having strong advocacy skills. As outlined by ASCA (2019; 2016; 2012), school counselors advocate for all students to have equitable access and opportunity to achieve academic success, career and college readiness and social/emotional health. Further, school counselors advocate for systemic change in education and for the role of the school counselor in the school, state and national arenas (ASCA 2019; 2016; 2012).

Considering the magnitude of advocacy in the role of the school counselor but with little information on what skills are included in advocacy work, Brown and Trusty (2005) introduced advocacy competencies for school counselors. These advocacy competencies used the advocacy competencies for special education professionals described by Fiedler (2000) as a guide, and expanded upon based on advocacy literature and Trusty and Brown's lived experiences as school counselors and counselor educators (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Figure 4 depicts the dispositions, knowledge and skills related to school counseling advocacy competencies developed by Trusty and Brown.

Figure 4

School Counselor Advocacy Competencies

School Counselor Advocacy Competencies

Dispositions

Advocacy disposition. This disposition outlines how school counselors embrace their advocacy role and the motivations that drive advocacy work, namely, students' holistic well-being.	**Family support and empowerment disposition.** School counselors recognize the need to empower and empathize with parents/guardians and to collaborate with them in advocating for the student.	**Social advocacy disposition.** School counselors advocate for positive systemic changes that increase access and equity for all; as well as the role of a school counselor as a change agent in these systems.	**Ethical disposition.** This disposition indicates that school counselors highly value the ethical codes of the profession and use these codes and laws to guide how they advocate.

Knowledge

Knowledge of resources. School counselors have knowledge about the various types of resources, within and outside of the school, and how to use them in the advocacy process.	**Knowledge of parameters.** For school counselors to be able to advocate within systems, they must know school policies and procedures, laws protecting students and families, and the scope of the school counselor's role.	**Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms.** School counselors have knowledge about how to mediate and resolve conflict in order to work collaboratively to solve problems.	**Knowledge of advocacy models.** School counselors have knowledge about advocacy models so that they are able to adapt to the advocacy situation as it evolves.	**Knowledge of systems change.** In order for positive change to happen, school counselors know about systems of schools and society and how to effect change across all levels of the school and social ecosystem.

Skills

Communication skills. School counselors are able to communicate productively using listening and empathy skills to reach a shared understanding of the problem and how to move forward in the advocacy	**Collaboration skills.** School counselors develop and sustain collaborative relationships with students, parents/guardians, and professionals both within and outside of the school.	**Problem-assessment skills.** When problems arise, school counselors are able to assess and define the problem, as are they able to determine which advocacy "battles" will be most efficacious to take on.	**Problem-solving skills.** School counselors use their collaboration and communication skills, as well as, their knowledge of counseling theories and systems change to develop goals and actions to solve problems.	**Organizational skills.** School counselors use their organizational skills to effectively plan, implement and evaluate their advocacy efforts.

Note. Adapted from Trusty and Brown (2005*)*.

The school counselor competencies make it clear that the role of advocate for school counselors is complex. While many advocacy efforts are on behalf of students and families, another primary task of school counselors is to advocate for themselves and for the profession.

As stated by Young and Lambie, “counselors can fight against the stresses inherent in practice, and to do so, they must also learn to be their own advocates” (2007, p. 99). For school counselors, **school counselor self-advocacy** is critical to both their wellbeing and the success of their programs (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Clemens, Shipp and Kimbel defined **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)** in the school counseling profession as “the ability to effectively and appropriately communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert information about ideal school counselors’ roles to those with the ability to change the circumstances that contribute to the problem or inequity” (2011, p.34).

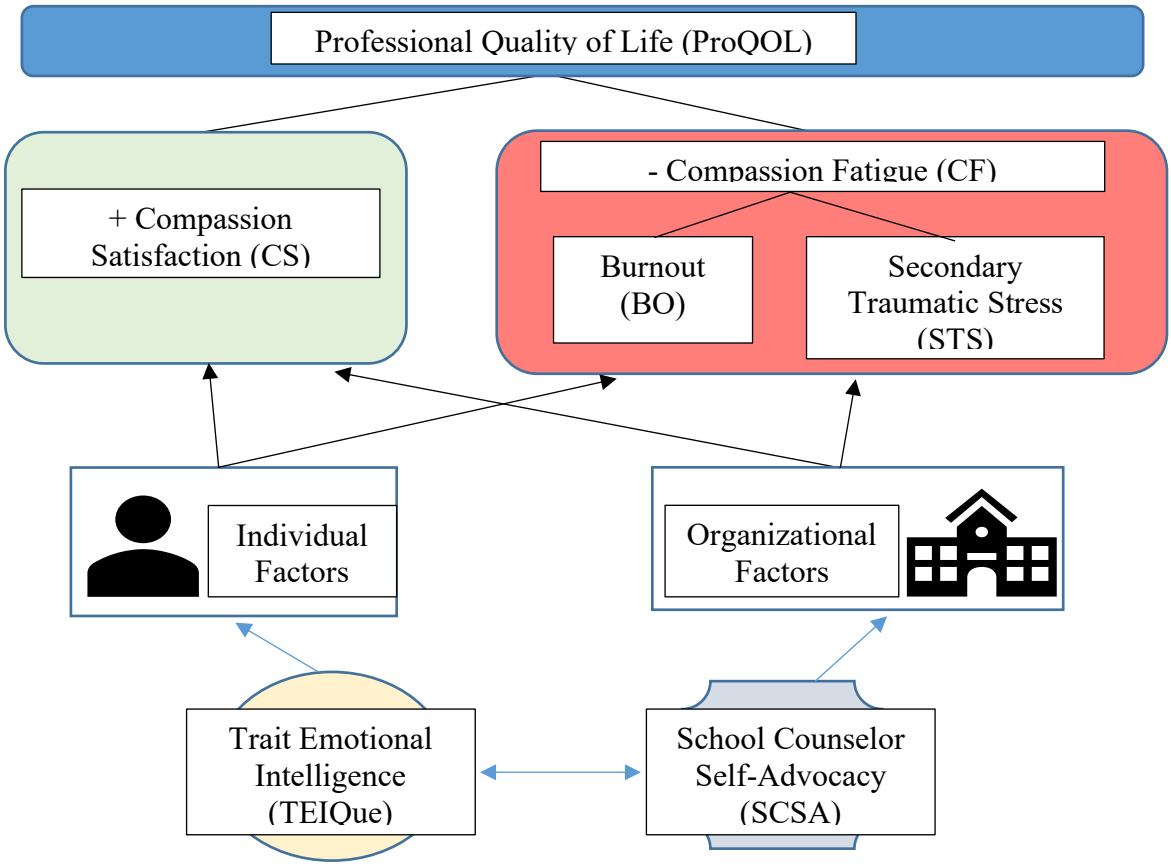
As discussed above, one of the major barriers school counselors face in implementing a comprehensive school counseling program is role stress (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Role stress in school counselors involves role ambiguity and role conflict stemming from “conflicting and inconsistent messages school counselors receive and their personal viewpoints” (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005, p. 59). An example of role conflict is when a school counselor is tasked with disciplining students (typically an administrative duty); disciplining students conflicts with the role of a school counselor as defined by ASCA because it can create barriers in the therapeutic relationship between student and school counselor and decrease efficacy of the school counselor’s interventions. Role ambiguity can be exemplified as: an administrator operating on outdated information about the scope of school counseling may expect their school counselor to perform tasks such as testing coordination, record-keeping, or acting as a substitute teacher. School counselors who are able to self-advocate can reduce roll stress by communicating the role of the school counselor to stakeholders, negotiating appropriate duties, and establishing themselves as

leaders and consultants in the holistic development of students. While **school counselor self-advocacy** has been studied in the school counseling population, how it relates to **ProQOL** has not yet been researched. This was one aim of the current study.

Trait emotional intelligence and **school counselor self-advocacy** influence **compassion satisfaction** and **compassion fatigue** through affecting individual and organizational factors that contribute to **professional quality of life** in school counselors. This is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Trait Emotional Intelligence and School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Interactions with Professional Quality of Life Components



Summary

School counselors are critical components in the holistic development of young people, school safety, school climate and the success of all students. Unfortunately, many school counselors leave the profession due to low **professional quality of life**, or high **compassion fatigue** and low **compassion satisfaction**. Previous research has identified several organizational and individual factors contribute to school counselors' **compassion fatigue** and **compassion satisfaction**. Two constructs that may positively influence many of the individual and organizational factors, and thus **professional quality of life** in school counselors are **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy**. The current study examined the relationships between **trait emotional intelligence**, **school counselor self-advocacy**, and **professional quality of life**, and further sought to explore whether **school counselor self-advocacy** and **trait emotional intelligence** interacted to significantly predicted **professional quality of life.**

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the relationships between **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)**, **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)**and the components of **professional quality of life (ProQOL): compassion satisfaction (CS)**, **burnout (BO)**, **secondary traumatic stress (STS)**. Additionally, the predictive nature of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** in regards to **CS**, **BO** and **STS** were explored. A correlational research design was used to investigate the relationships between variables.

Participants

The study sample was drawn from two main sources: the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and state school counseling associations (SCA) in the United States. An invitation to participate in the study with a link to the survey was posted on ASCA's networking website, ASCA Scene, in early January 2020 and again in early February 2020. In addition, emails were sent to state SCA with a request to disseminate the research invitation to their membership in early January and again in early February to those state SCAs who had not responded to the first email request. The survey also included a request for participants to pass on the survey to school counselors in their network in an effort to reach school counselors who are not members of either ASCA or their SCA. In order to incentivize survey completion, participants who complete the survey were directed to a separate survey where they could enter their contact information into a drawing for a $50 Amazon gift card.

An a priori power analysis to compute the required sample size was conducted using the computer app G*Power, Version 3.1. The input parameters used were an effect size of $f^2 = 0.35$ (large effect), $\alpha = 0.05$, $1 - \beta = 0.95$, and two predictors. The analysis revealed a minimum sample size of 48 would be needed for a large effect size. A total of 266 school counselors

responded to the survey and after removing incomplete data sets, 194 responses were fit for analysis, exceeding the minimum number of participants needed for a large effect size.

The sample was comprised of 168 females (86.6%), 24 males (12.4%), and one non-binary individual (0.5%) who identified as Trans Masculine; one individual did not respond to this question. Most of the participants indicated their Race/Ethnicity as White (*n* = 162, 83.5%), followed by Black or African American (*n* = 16, 8.2%), Hispanic or LatinX (*n* = 8, 4.1%), Biracial (*n* = 4, 2.1%), and Asian (*n* = 1, .5%); three people did not disclose this information There were no participants who identified as Alaska Native or American Indian, nor Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Participants were also given the option of reporting any other identities they had which they felt were important to their work. Of the 12.3% participants who responded to this question, five identified as parents (2.6%), four indicated they had a dual license or a background in clinical mental health (2.1%), four were school counseling leaders such as a district supervisor (2.1%), three identified as belonging to the LGBTQ+ community (1.5%), two were bilingual (1.0%), two had experience in private schools (1.0%), two indicated that school counseling is their second career (1.0%), one had dual citizenship (0.5%) and one had military experience (0.5%). Participants ranged in age from 23 years to 69 years old, with a mean age of 43.25 years and a standard deviation of 10 years. Most participants (*n* = 102, 52.6%) worked in towns/cities with populations less than 25,000; a breakdown of the community populations of participants' workplace can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Population of the Communities in which Participants Work

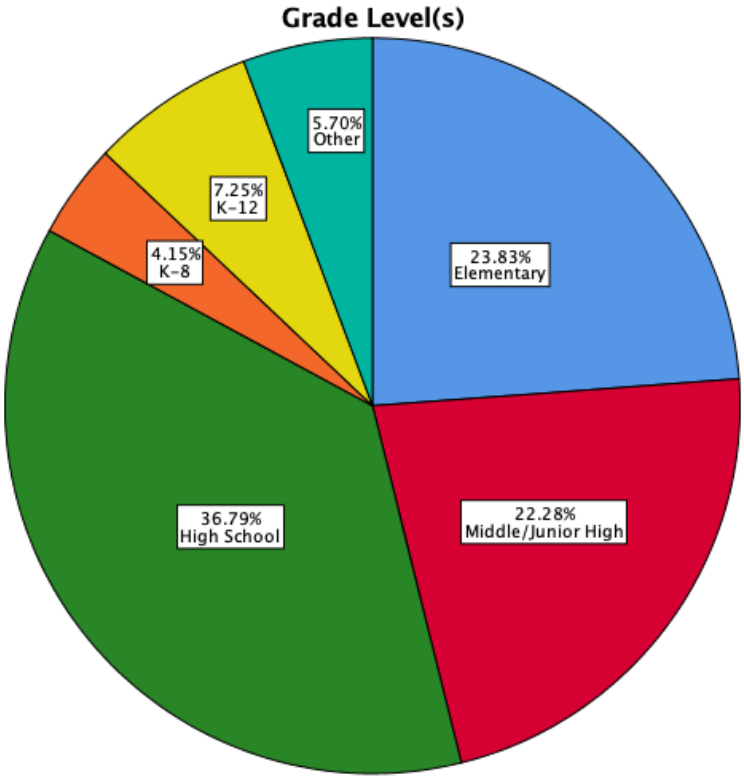
Population	#	%
1-1,000	15	7.7
1,001-10,000	57	29.4
10,001-25,000	32	16.5

25,001-50,000	33	17.0
50,001-100,000	10	5.2
100,001-250,000	9	4.6
250,001-1,000,000	8	4.1
1,000,001+	8	4.1
Missing Response	22	11.3
Total	194	100.0

The majority (*n* = 179, 92.3%) of the sample indicated they were members of either ASCA or their state SCA, while fifteen participants (7.7%) were not members of any professional school counselor association. Additionally, participants were asked to rank their sense of belonging to the school counseling profession on a 5 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The majority of participants (*n* = 103, 52.1%) responded that they strongly agreed to having a sense of belonging in the school counseling profession; 34.5% (*n* = 67) of respondents reported that they somewhat agreed, 2.1% (n = 4) neither disagreed nor agreed, 8.2% (*n* = 16) somewhat disagreed, and 2.1% (*n* = 4) indicated that they strongly disagreed that they felt a sense of belonging in the profession. In addition, 38.7% (*n* = 75) of the participants were the only school counselor in their school building. Participants worked at all grade band levels, with the majority working at the high school level (*n* = 71, 36.6%), followed by elementary level (*n* = 46, 23.7%), middle school/junior high (*n* = 43, 22.2%), K-12 (*n* = 14, 7.2%), other including those who work at both middle and high school and those who work pK-6 (*n* = 11, 5.7%), and K-8 (*n* = 8, 4.1%). This breakdown of grade levels reported can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Grade Bands(s) with which Participants Work



Participants ranged in number of years employed as a school counselor from less than a year to 36 years; a breakdown of years of experience as a school counselor can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Years of Experience as a School Counselor

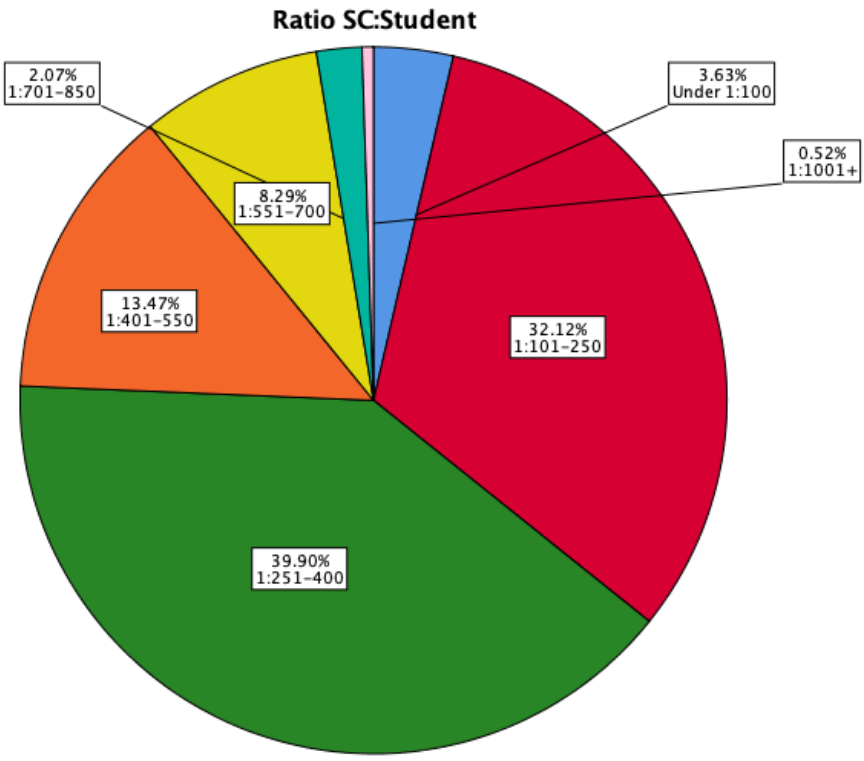
Years experience	#	%
0-1 years	17	8.8
2-5 years	48	24.7
6-10 years	34	17.5
11-15 years	29	14.9
16-20 years	30	15.5
21+ years	35	18
Missing Response	1	0.5
Total	193	100.0

Participants reported that their caseloads ranged from 17 to 1000 students with a mean of 335 students on a single school counselor's caseload, exceeding the recommended ratio of one school

counselor to 250 students. The school counselor-to-student ratios of participants can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 6

School Counselor-to-Student Ratio



Participants were also asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on non-counseling duties in one week; percentages reported ranged from 0 to 90% with an average of 22.79% and standard deviation of 20.471%. In addition, participants were asked if they felt they had the resources to meet the demands of their work on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = somewhat disagree to 5 = strongly agree); 22.7% (n = 44) reported that they strongly agreed, 53.1% (n = 103) somewhat agreed, 3.6% (n = 7) neither agreed or disagreed, 13.9% (n = 27) somewhat disagreed, and 6.2% (n = 12) strongly disagreed that they had the resources to meet the demands of their work.

Research Design

This quantitative study used a non-experimental cross-sectional survey research design and included four survey instruments. The purpose of the research study was to assess the relationships between **professional quality of life (ProQOL)**, **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)**, and **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)** in practicing school counselors. This design was chosen for several reasons. As these variables have not been studied together prior to the current study, a cross-sectional design, in which data is gathered from participants at one point in time (Babbie, 1990; Creswell, 2009), provided an initial exploration of the relationships among variables. Due to the limited free time school counselors have in their days, a survey design provided a low time investment opportunity to participate in research. Survey design was also chosen for the low cost of data collection; faster speed of response; ease of data entry and formatting flexibility (Granello, & Wheaton, 2004).

Instrumentation

Four instruments were used to gather data on participants' demographics, **professional quality of life**, **trait emotional intelligence**, and **school counselor self-advocacy**.

Demographic Information

Both personal demographic and career demographics were collected to better understand the sample. Personal demographic data collected included: age; gender; race/ethnicity and an open response question where participants could report any other of their identities that they felt were important to their work as school counselors. Career demographics data collected included: number of years employed as a school counselor; grade band(s) with which they work; population of the community in which they work; their school counselor to student ratio; percentage of time spent on non-counseling duties per week; and whether they were members of

a professional school counseling association. In addition, participants were asked the degree to which they felt they had enough resources to meet the demands of the work and whether they felt a sense of belonging in the profession. Demographic questions can be seen in Appendix A.

Professional Quality of Life

The Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version 5 (ProQoL-5; Stamm, 2010; Appendix B) is a 30 item self-report scale that measures **compassion satisfaction** and the components of **compassion fatigue**: **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**. Each of the subscales, **compassion satisfaction (CS)**, **burnout (BO)** and **secondary traumatic stress (STS)**, contain 10 items. Respondents were asked to rate each item based on the specific frequency of experience in the last 30 days in their work setting; response options range from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Scores were calculated for each of the subscales by calculating the average score for each subscale (after reverse scoring negative items). For each subscale a score of 22 or less is considered a "Low" level, 23-41 indicate "Moderate" level, and 42 or more indicate a "High" level.

Psychometrics of the ProQoL. The ProQOL-5 has acceptable reliability for the **burnout** sub scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$) and good reliability for the **secondary traumatic stress** (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) and **compassion satisfaction** (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) sub scales (Stamm, 2010). The ProQOL-5 also has demonstrated good construct validity with low shared variance between **compassion satisfaction** and **secondary traumatic stress** ($r = -.23$; co-$\sigma = 5\%$; $n = 1187$) and **burnout** ($r = -.14$; co-$\sigma = 2\%$; $n = 1187$). **Burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress** had higher shared variance ($r = .58$; co-$\sigma = 34\%$; $n = 1187$); Stamm (2010) suggests that the higher shared variance between these two constructs is likely due to both constructs measuring negative affect, yet are still distinct constructs.

Trait Emotional Intelligence

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides, 2009; Appendix C) is a 30 item, self-report questionnaire designed to measure global **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)**. The short form was derived from the full TEIQue-SF, which measures 15 facets of **TEIQue**; two items from each of the 15 facets measured are included in the short form. Responses are given using a Likert-type format with 7 scale options, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). As opposed to the full form, the TEIQue-SF does not measure each of the 15 facets separately; rather the short form provides scores on five domains of **TEIQue**: well-being, self-control, emotionality, sociability, and total global trait (Petrides, 2006). However, developers of the TEIQue-SF recommend using the form as a measure of global **TEIQue** rather than individual facet scores. The global **TEIQue** score is calculated by summing item scores (after reverse scoring negative items) and dividing the sum by the total number of items. A higher score on the TEIQue-SF indicates higher **trait emotional intelligence**.

Psychometrics of the TEIQue-SF. Cooper and Petrides (2010) report strong internal consistency of the TEIQue-SF with alpha coefficients ranging from .87 to .89. Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) found similar strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) in a sample of 539 mental health counselors. Siegling and colleagues (2015) assessed the incremental validity of the TEIQue-SF in predicting perceived stress, anxiety, academic motivation, depression and satisfaction with life over and above the Big Five personality traits and stress coping. Siegling and team found that the TEIQue-SF significantly predicted the criterion above and beyond the Big Five and stress coping. Laborde, Allen, and Guillén (2016) assessed the concurrent validity of the Spanish translation of the TEIQue-SF against the long-form Spanish version (TEIQue-LF)

using a sample of 1889 Spanish adults. They found a significant strong positive correlation between the two assessments on global **TEIQue** ($r = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, Laborde et al. performed confirmatory factor analysis to assess the construct validity of the TEIQ-SF and results indicated an excellent fit to the factor structure (X^2 (2) = 6.29, $p = 0.002$).

School Counselor Self-Advocacy

The School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SCSAQ) was developed and validated by Clemens, Shipp and Kimbel to assess the skills a school counselor uses in advocating for their role (2011; Appendix D). The SCSAQ is a nine-item self-report questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale with response options of: strongly disagree (1); disagree (2); agree (3); and strongly agree (4). Items on the nine-item questionnaire were developed based on Trusty and Brown's advocacy skill sets: communication; collaboration; problem assessment; problem solving; organizational; and self-care. Five of the nine questions have an emphasis on advocacy skills used with the school administrator, which is reflective of the importance of the principal-school counselor relationship in minimizing role stress (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008; Perusse, Goodnough, & Bouknight, 2007; Rock, Remley, & Range, 2017).

Psychometrics of the SCSAQ. Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted using two separate norming samples (sample 1, $n = 161$; sample 2, $n = 120$) of practicing school counselors in the Southeast and Northwest regions of the United States. The samples of the EFA and CFA had limited variability in demographics with the majority of participants identifying as white females working in either elementary or high school settings. Findings from the EFAs indicated a one-factor solution explained 47% of the variance in the correlation matrix and factor loadings ranging from .43 to .79. A 10-item SCSAQ had a

Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of .87. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that there were two items that correlated highly ($r > .80$), thus the final questionnaire contains nine items. Cronbach's alpha inter-item reliability was high at .84 and inter-item correlations for each item were statistically significant ($p = .05$). Clemens and team conducted several fit statistics to assess model fit: Comparative Fit Index (FI) was .86 indicating a reasonable fit; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMSR) was .08 indicating an acceptable fit; Goodness of Fit indicator (GFI) statistic was .80, again indicating a reasonable fit.

Clemens and colleagues (2010) used three measures to assess for concurrent validity with the SCSAQ. Two measures were used to demonstrate convergent validity, the Leader-member Exchange Seven (LMX7; Paglis & Green, 2002) and the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS; Clemens et al., 2010). The LMX7 measures the relationship quality between subordinate and superior, or, school counselor and principal. The correlation between the LMX7 and the SCSAQ was .52. The SCPIS assesses school counselor implementation of the ASCA National Model and use of data to in delivering a program; school counselor self-advocacy has been positively linked to program implementation and using data to advocate for one's program needs and outcomes. The SCPIS and the SCSAQ were positively correlated for both the implementation of the National model ($r = .37$) and use of data ($r = .25$) The third measure Clemens et al. used was the Burnout Measure-Short Version (Malach-Pines, 2005) to assess divergent validity; the correlation between the SCSAQ and the Burnout Measure-Short Version was -.16.

Data Analysis

Data from the Qualtrics survey was exported and analyzed using SPSS software. Attention was given in scoring the ProQOL-5, TEIQue-SF and SCSAQ to ensure correct scoring,

fidelity of data entry and identification of outliers. Prior to analysis the data was assessed to ensure the statistical assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedacity, and multicollinearity were met. Descriptive statistics were acquired to provide an overall picture of the data including: frequencies; means; standard deviations; and ranges of data.

Two statistical tests were used to answer the research questions: Pearson's *r* correlation and standard multiple regression. Pearson's *r* correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between the variables of **TEIQue**, **SCSA**, **BO**, **STS**, and **CS**. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the predictive nature of the variables **TEIQue** and **SCSA** in regards to the three subscales of **ProQOL** (**burnout, secondary traumatic stress, compassion satisfaction**).

Summary

This study investigated the relationships between **trait emotional intelligence**, **school counselor self-advocacy** and **professional quality of life** in professional school counselors using Pearson's *r* correlations. Standard multiple regressions were conducted to assess the predictive nature and interaction of **school counselor self-advocacy** and **trait emotional intelligence** in relation to **burnout, secondary traumatic stress** and **compassion satisfaction**. The results are presented and discussed in the following pages.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between the variables **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)**, **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)**, **compassion satisfaction (CS)**, **burnout (BO)** and **secondary traumatic stress (STS)** in school counselors. In addition, this study aimed to determine if **TEIQue**, and **SCSA** were predictors of **CS**, **BO** and **STS**. In this chapter, descriptive statistics will be presented as an overall picture of the variables in the sample followed by correlational analyses to address research questions 1 through 6. Regression analyses will be presented to answer research questions 7 through 10 which focus on the predictive nature of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** in regards to **CS**, **BO** and **STS**.

Preliminary Analysis

After incomplete data sets were removed, a total of 194 cases were fit for analysis. Although normality is assumed due to the sample size (N > 30) based on Central Limit Theorem, skewness and kurtosis were calculated and normality was confirmed as skewness values did not exceed 2.0 and kurtosis values did not exceed 7.0 (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). There were few outliers (n = 3; 0.02%) in the sample; however, these cases were left in the analysis as they were determined to be legitimate responses and not a result of improper data entry or extreme responding. The outlier cases were also left in after analyzing the effect they had on the mean as compared with the 5% trimmed mean and the residual scatter plots. Multicollinearity was assessed based on the correlation coefficient between predictors as well as examining the tolerance and VIF indicators. While the predictors, TEIQue and SCSAQ were strongly correlated (r = .545), they were not so highly correlated that the relationship violates the assumption of multicollinearity; additionally, the tolerance and VIF indicators for all three regressions did not

show evidence of collinearity as the tolerance values (.703 for all three regressions) were not less than .10 and the VIF values (1.423 for all three regressions) were not above 10.

Descriptive Statistics

To get an overall picture of the sample, descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, 5% trimmed mean, range of scores, skewness and kurtosis were calculated. Results for all variables (N = 194) can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for Compassion Satisfaction (CS), burnout (BO), secondary traumatic stress (STS), Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue) and School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy (SCSAQ) (N = 194)

	M	*SD*	5% Trimmed Mean	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
CS	40.67	5.497	40.90	19	50
BO	22.91	5.545	22.79	10	40
STS	21.73	4.979	21.62	11	35
TEIQue	5.47	0.599	5.48	3.83	6.87
SCSAQ	29.48	3.797	29.54	15	36

Professional Quality of Life

The sample of school counselors had an average score of 40.67 on the **compassion satisfaction (CS)** scale, indicating a moderate level of **CS** (Stamm, 2010). Both of the sample means for **burnout** (BO; *M* = 22.91) and **secondary traumatic stress** (STS: *M* = 21.73) were in the low levels (Stamm, 2010). Figures 7-9 depict the histograms of each **ProQOL** subscale with markers for the low, moderate and high-level ranges.

Figure 7

Histogram Compassion Satisfaction

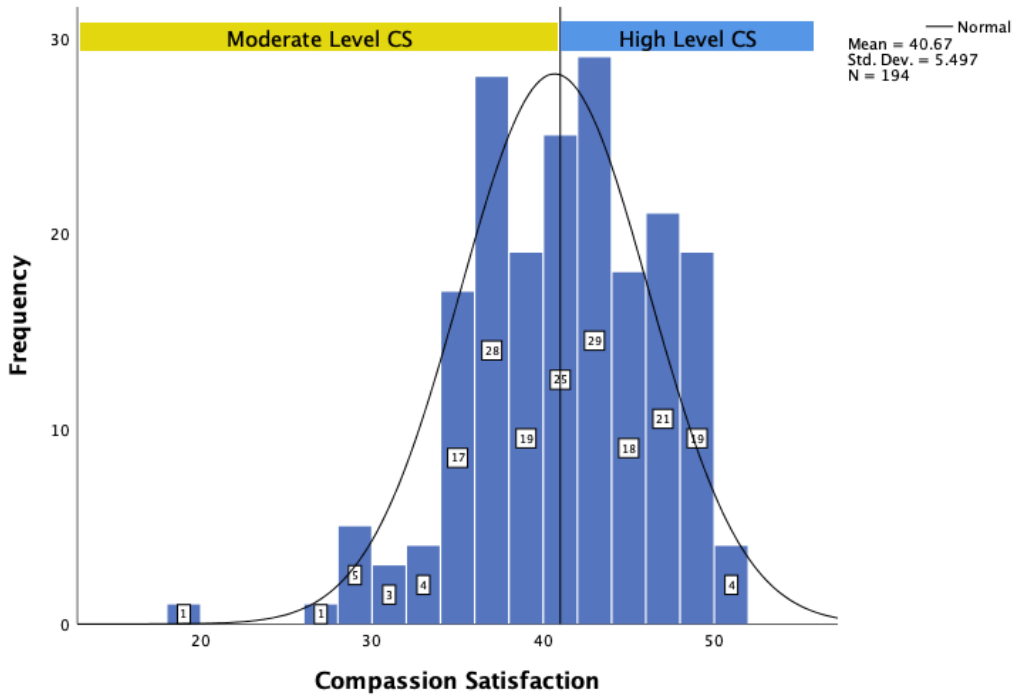


Figure 8

Histogram Burnout

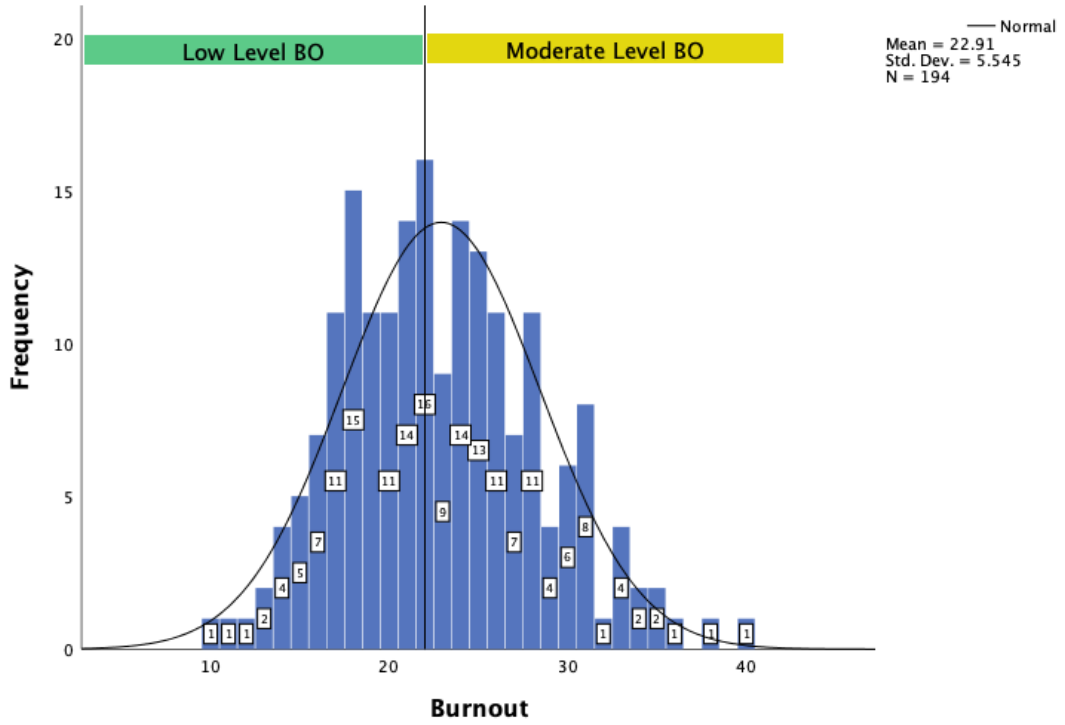
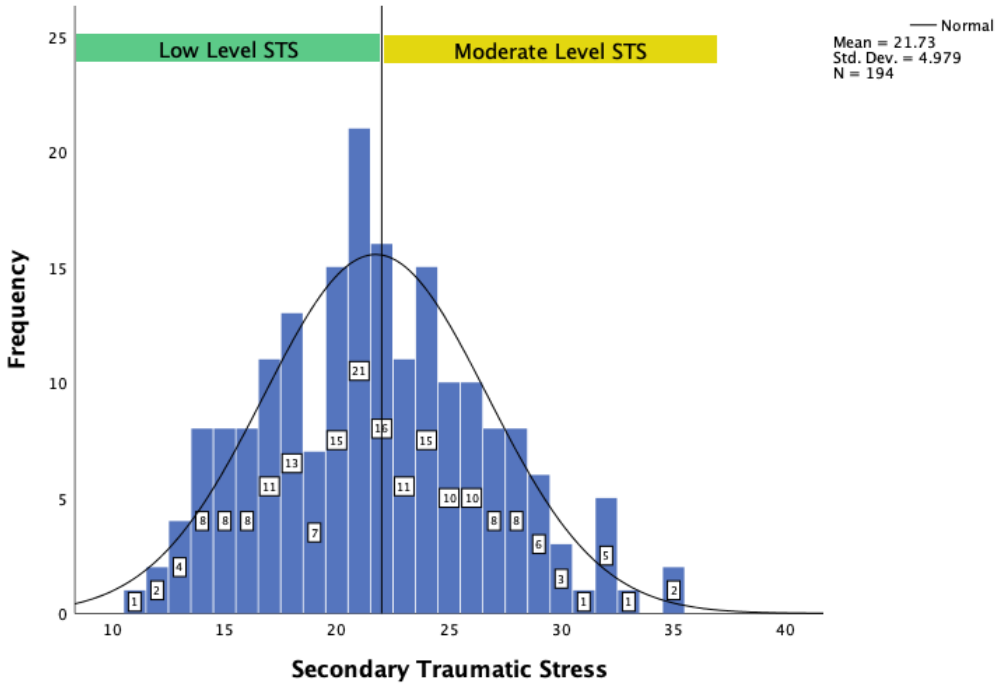


Figure 9

Histogram Secondary traumatic Stress



Additionally, Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for this study's sample of school counselors scores on the **ProQoL** subscales as compared with the normed group for the **ProQOL** (Stamm, 2010) comprised of individuals working in various helping professions (e.g. social services, emergency response, health care professionals, school personnel); a sample of 577 school counselors in the USA (Mullen, 2014); and a sample of 506 clinical mental health counselors in the USA (Lawson & Myers, 2011).

Table 4

Descriptive Data: Professional Quality of Life Subscales Compared with Previous Studies

	Total		Norm Group (Stamm, 2010)		School Counselors (Mullen, 2014)		Clinical MH Counselors (Lawson & Myers, 2011)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
CS	40.67	5.50	37.00	7.30	42.50	5.47	40.53	5.57
BO	22.91	5.55	22.00	6.80	20.83	5.29	19.93	5.96
STS	21.73	4.98	13.00	6.30	19.40	4.92	10.32	5.98

Trait Emotional Intelligence

School counselors in this study had a mean score of 5.47 for **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)**. Figure 10 depicts the histogram of the **TEIQue** scores and Table 5 includes descriptive statistics for this study as compared with a normed group of 1,119 individuals in the USA (Cooper & Petrides, 2010) and a sample of 539 clinical mental health counselors who were administered the TEIQue-SF (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016). Also included in Table 5 as a comparison are the descriptive statistics from a study of 203 school counselors in Spain (Cejudo, 2016); this sample was chosen as there are no credible studies that have used the TEIQue-SF with school counselors in the USA.

Figure 10

Histogram Trait Emotional Intelligence

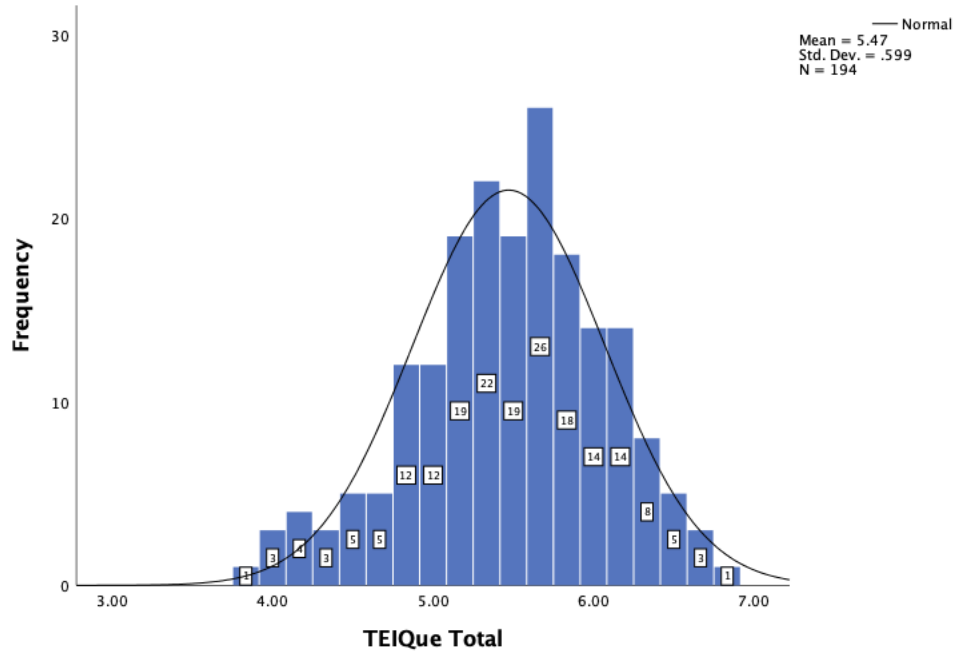


Table 5

Descriptive Data: Trait Emotional Intelligence Compared with Previous Studies

	Total		Norm Group (Cooper & Petrides, 2010)		School Counselors (Cejudo, 2016)		Clinical MH Counselors (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
TEIQue	5.47	0.599	-	-	4.69	0.61	5.59	0.51
TEIQue by Gender								
Female	5.45	0.60	5.18	0.68	-	-	-	-
Male	5.61	0.62	5.02	0.73	-	-	-	-

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy

The sample mean for **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)**was 29.48 (*N* = 194, *SD* = 3.80). Figure 11 depicts the histogram of **SCSA** scores. This sample's **SCSA** mean is similar to the means for both the norm group used for instrument development (*N* = 580, *M* = 29.33; Clemens, Shipp, & Kimbel, 2011) and a recent study of school counselors (*N* = 97, *M* = 29.85; Havlik, Ciarletta, & Crawford, 2019). The total instrument means reported for the comparison

studies were calculated using reported item level means as the publications did not include the total instrument means. Descriptive data for this sample and the comparison studies can be seen in Table 6. School counselors in this study reported the highest mean scores for item 1, maintaining positive working relationships with others in the school (M = 3.65, SD = .56) and item 5, using problem-solving skills when confronted with role challenges (M = 3.42, SD = .54). Descriptive statistics for the total score and individual items can be seen in Table 6, as well as, descriptive statistics from the two studies for comparison.

Figure 11

Histogram School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy

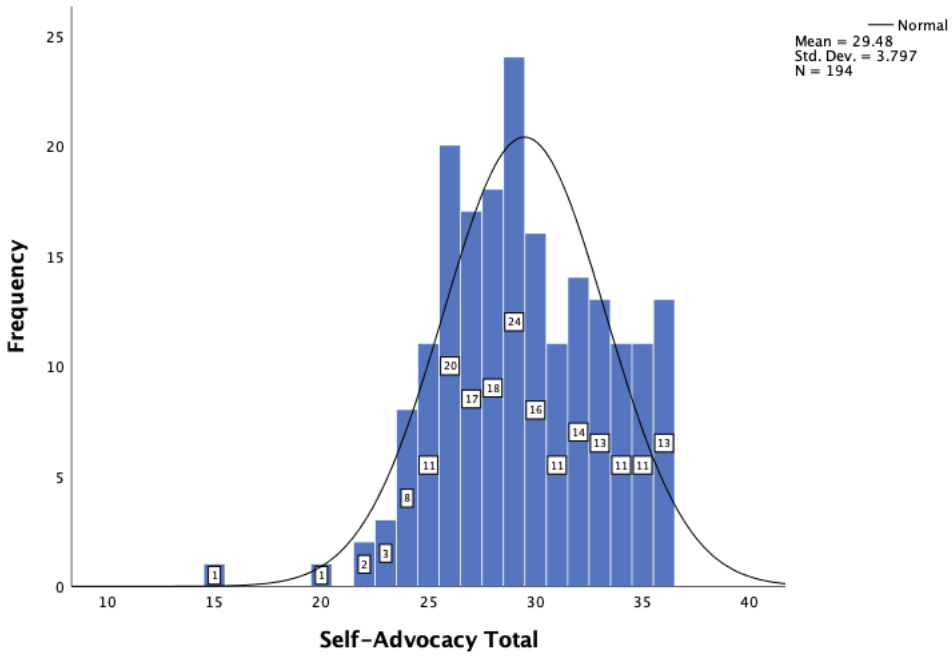


Table 6

Descriptive Data: School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Compared with Previous Studies

	Total		Norm Group (Clemens, Shipp, & Kimbel, 2011)		Havlik, Ciarletta, & Crawford (2019)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
SCSA Total	29.48	3.80	29.33	-	29.85	-
1. I maintain positive working relationships…in the school	3.65	.56	3.73	.57	3.64	.65
2. I effectively communicate…my role to my principal	3.24	.72	3.34	.67	3.47	.60
3. I "choose my battles" when advocating for my role…	3.37	.56	3.22	.67	3.14	.68
4. I listen to my principal's perspective on my role as a school counselor	3.32	.57	3.37	.55	3.28	.53
5. I use problem-solving skills to find solutions to role challenges	3.42	.54	3.42	.60	3.46	.65
6. I present information clearly about my role…to my principal.	3.21	.67	3.18	.72	3.34	.64
7. I share data with my principal…	2.99	.80	2.78	.76	3.09	.69
8. I follow-up appropriate with my principal…	3.18	.69	3.07	.74	3.20	.62
9. I cope effectively with challenges to my role…	3.10	.61	3.22	.61	3.23	.62

Note: SCSAQ = School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy questionnaire.

Correlational Analysis

A primary goal of this study was to examine the relationships between the variables of interest. Following are the results of correlational analysis examining the relationships between the independent variables of **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue)** and **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)** and the dependent variables **CS**, **BO** and **STS**.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Professional Quality of Life

Research questions one through three ask about the relationships between **TEIQue** and the components of **ProQOL**: **CS**, **BO** and **STS**. From these questions the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

$H1_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

H2: There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **burnout** in professional school counselors.

$H2_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **burnout** in professional school counselors.

H3: There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

$H3_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine any associations between the **TEIQue** score and the **CS, BO,** and **STS** scales of the ProQoL-5. There was a strong statistically significant positive correlation between **TEIQue** and **CS** ($r = .655$, $n = 194$, $p < .001$) with high levels of **TEIQue** associated with high levels of **CS**. There was a strong statistically significant negative correlation between **TEIQue** and **BO** ($r = -.695$, $n = 194$, $p < .001$) and a medium statistically significant negative correlation between **TEIQue** scores and **STS** ($r = -.448$, $n = 194$, $p < .001$) indicating that higher **TEIQue** is associated with lower levels

of **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**. As a result of these findings, null hypotheses one, two, and three were rejected. Table 7 lists the complete results.

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Professional Quality of Life

Research questions four through six asked about the relationships between **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)** and the components of **ProQOL**: **CS**, **BO** and **STS**. From these questions the following hypotheses were tested:

H4: There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

$H4_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

H5: There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **burnout** in professional school counselors.

$H5_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship **school counselor self-advocacy** and **burnout** in professional school counselors.

H6: There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

$H6_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine any associations between the School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire total score (SCSA) and the **CS, BO**, and **STS** scales of the ProQoL-5. There was a strong positive correlation between **SCSA** and **CS**, $r = .591$, $n = 194$, $p < .001$ with high levels of **school counselor self-advocacy** associated with high levels of **compassion satisfaction**. There was a

medium negative correlation between **SCSA** and **BO** (r = -.419, n = 194, p < .001) and a small negative correlation between **SCSA** and **STS** (r = -.225 n = 194, p < .01) indicating higher of **school counselor self-advocacy** is associated with lower levels of **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**. As a result of these findings, null hypotheses four, five, and six were rejected. Table 7 lists the complete results.

Table 7

Pearson Product-moment Correlations Between TEIQue, School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Subscales of ProQoL-5

	CS	BO	STS	TEIQue	SCSA
CS					
BO	-.741**				
STS	-.363**	.591**			
TEIQue	.655**	-.695**	-.448**		
SCSA	.591**	-.419**	-.225*	.545**	

** p < .001 (2-tailed). * p < .01 (2-tailed).

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Trait Emotional Intelligence

Research question seven asked: What is the relationship between **school counselor self-advocacy** and **trait emotional intelligence** in professional school counselors? From this question, the following hypotheses were tested:

H7: There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** in professional school counselors.

$H7_0$: There will be no statistically significant relationship between **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** in professional school counselors.

Again, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between the TEIQue-SF total score (**TEIQue)** and the SCSAQ total score (**SCSA**). **TEIQue** and **SCSA** had a strong positive correlation with one another, r = .545, n = 194, p <

.001, indicating that higher levels of **trait emotional intelligence** correspond with higher levels of **school counselor self-advocacy**. As a result of these findings, null hypothesis seven was rejected.

Regression Analyses

To further investigate the interaction among variables, three standard multiple regressions were conducted to determine the ability of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** to predict **CS, BO** and **STS**. These analyses were used to answer research questions eight through ten and test the following hypotheses:

H8: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will interact and significantly predict **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

$H8_0$: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will not interact and predict **compassion satisfaction** in professional school counselors.

H9: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will interact and significantly predict **burnout** in professional school counselors.

$H9_0$: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will not interact and predict **burnout** in professional school counselors.

H10: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will interact and significantly predict **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

$H10_0$: **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** will not interact and predict **secondary traumatic stress** in professional school counselors.

Standard multiple regression was used to determine the unique variance in the dependent variables (**CS, BO, STS**) that the predictor variables, **TEIQue** and **SCSA,** explain. Preliminary analyses were conducted to identify and remove outliers and to ensure there were no violations

to the assumptions of normality, linearity, independence of residuals, multicollinearity and homoscedacity.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Self Advocacy as Predictors of Compassion Satisfaction

Results of the first multiple regression examining the predictive nature of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** in regards to **CS** showed that the independent variables explained 50.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .507$, $F(2, 191) = 98.158$, $p < .0005$), leading to a rejection of null hypothesis eight. In addition, the regression analysis showed that while both **TEIQue** and **SCSA** are significant predictors of **CS** at the $p < .0005$ level, **TEIQue** ($\beta = .473$) makes a stronger unique contribution to explaining **CS** than **SCSA** ($\beta = .334$). Results can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Results: TEIQue and SCSA as Predictors of Compassion Satisfaction

	B	*SE*	β	t	Sig.
TEIQue	4.336	.556	.473	7.799	.000*
SCSA	.483	.088	.334	5.507	.000*

Note: $R^2 = .507$

*$p < .0005$ (2-tailed)

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Self Advocacy as Predictors of Burnout

Results of the second multiple regression analysis examining the predictive nature of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** regarding **BO** showed that the independent variables explained 48.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .485$, $F(2, 191) = 89.987$, $p < .0005$), leading to a rejection of null hypothesis nine. In addition, the regression analysis showed that although the model was significant, **SCSA** ($\beta = -.057$, $p = .359$) does not make a significant unique contribution to explaining **BO**, while **TEIQue** ($\beta = -.664$, $p < .0005$) does make a significant unique contribution to explaining **BO**. Results can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Results: TEIQue and SCSA as Predictors of Burnout

	B	*SE*	β	t	Sig.
TEIQue	-6.141	.573	-.664	-10.719	.000*
SCSA	-.083	.090	-.057	-.920	.359

Note: $R^2 = .485$

*$p < .0005$ (2-tailed)

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Self Advocacy as Predictors of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Results of the third multiple regression examining the predictive nature of **TEIQue** and **SCSA** in regards to **STS** showed that the independent variables explained 20.1% of the variance ($R^2 = .201$, $F(2, 191) = 24.054$, $p < .0005$), leading to a rejection of null hypothesis ten. As with **burnout**, the regression analysis showed that although the model was significant, only **TEIQue** ($\beta = -.463$, $p < .0005$) makes a significant unique contribution to explaining **BO** while **SCSA** ($\beta = .027$, $p = .726$) does not. Results can be seen in Table 10

Table 10

Multiple Regression Results: TEIQue and SCSA as Predictors of Secondary Traumatic Stress

	B	*SE*	β	t	Sig.
TEIQue	-3.844	.641	-.463	-5.999	.000*
SCSA	.035	.101	.027	.351	.726

Note: $R^2 = .201$

*$p < .0005$ (2-tailed)

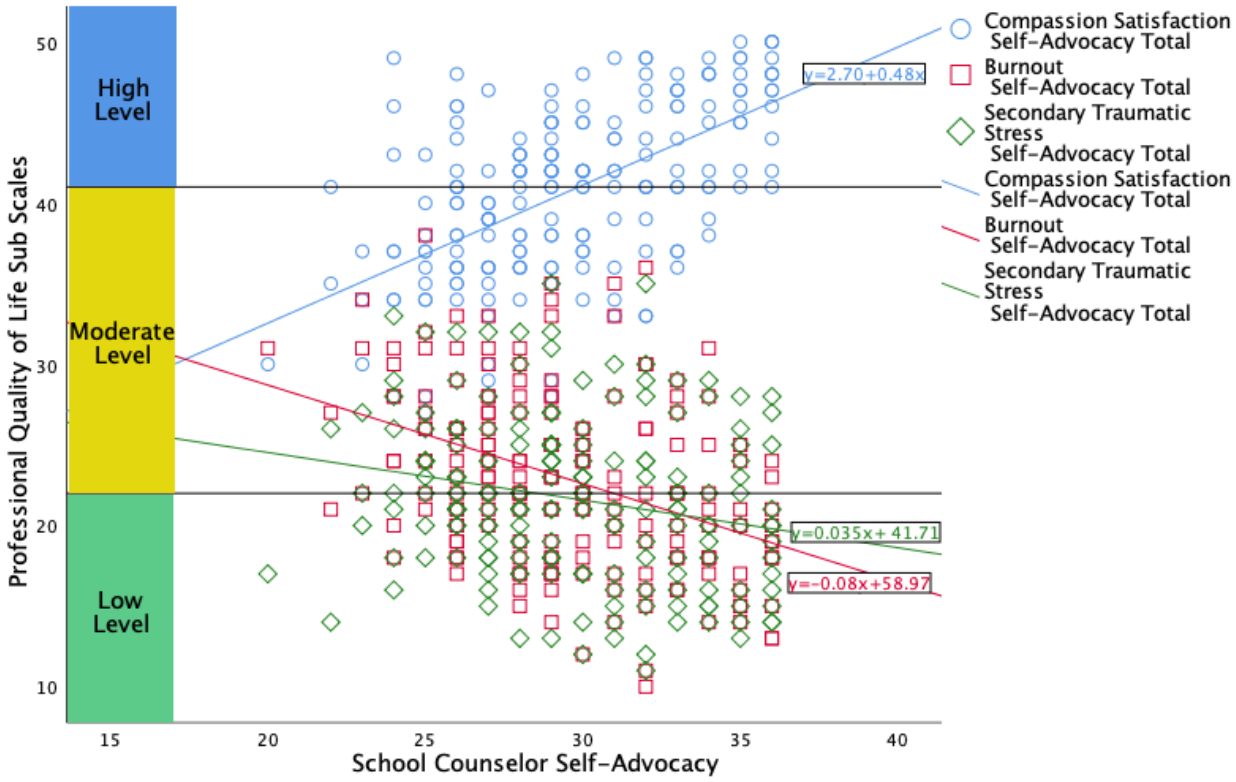
Figures 12 and 13 depict the scatter plots and lines of regression of the variables of interest with the independent variables, **TEIQue** and **SCSA**, on the X-axis and the dependent variables, the subscales of **ProQOL**, on the Y-axis.

Figure 12

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Subscales of Professional Quality of Life

Figure 13

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Subscales of Professional Quality of Life



Post-Hoc Analyses

After analysis to answer the research questions was completed, supplementary statistical analyses were conducted to explore the variables of interest. Several one-way between groups analyses of variance were conducted to assess if mean differences were statistically significant in the variables of interest when the sample was grouped according to: school counselor-to-student ratio, percentage of non-counseling duties performed in a week, and participants' felt sense of belonging in the profession.

There were no statistically significant differences found in any of the variables of interest (**CS, BO, STS, TEIQue, SCSA**) when the sample was grouped by percent of non-counseling duties or student-to-school counselor ratio. Results for these tests can be seen in Tables 11 and 12. However, sense of belonging in the profession showed significant differences between groups for **CS, BO, TEIQue** and **SCSA**, these results are described below.

Table 11

One-way Between-Groups ANOVA Results: Compassion Satisfaction (CS), Burnout (BO), and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) by Percent Non-Counseling Duties

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CS	197.83	8	24.73	.85	.564
BO	222.54	8	27.82	.91	.511
STS	321.18	8	40.15	1.67	.108
TEIQue	3.30	8	.41	1.19	.309
SCSAQ	141.821	8	17.73	.1.24	.278

Table 12

One-way Between-Groups ANOVA Results: Compassion Satisfaction (CS), Burnout (BO), and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) by Student-to-School Counselor Ratio

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CS	187.92	6	31.32	1.05	.398
BO	184.15	6	30.69	1.01	.420
STS	149.52	6	24.92	1.00	.427
TEIQue	1.31	6	.22	.61	.722
SCSAQ	165.30	6	27.55	1.99	.069

Five one-way between groups ANOVAs were conducted to assess differences in the variables of interest with the sample grouped according to participants' sense of belonging based on how much participants' agreed with the statement "I feel a sense of belonging in my work as a school counselor" (Group 1: Strongly Disagree; Group 2: Somewhat Disagree; Group 3: Neither Disagree or Agree; Group 4: Somewhat Agree; Group 5: Strongly Agree). Results of the ANOVAs showed significant differences between groups for the variables of **CS**: F (4,189) = 19.29, p = .000; **BO**: F (4,189) = 18.75, p = .000; **TEIQue**: F (4,189) = 12.75, p = .000; and **SCSA**: F (4,189) = 10.08, p = .000. The effect sizes, calculated using eta squared, were: .29 for **CS**; .28 for **BO**; .27 for **TEIQue**; and .18 for **SCSA** all indicating large effects. Full results can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13

One-way Between-Groups ANOVA Results: Compassion Satisfaction (CS), Burnout (BO), and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) by Sense of Belonging

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
CS	1690.97	4	422.74	19.29	.000	.29
BO	1685.33	4	421.33	18.75	.000	.28
STS	126.77	4	31.69	1.29	.277	.03
TEIQue	14.73	4	3.68	12.75	.000	.21
SCSAQ	489.38	4	122.35	10.08	.000	.18

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the **CS** mean scores for Group 1 (*M* = 32.50, *SD* = 5.066) was significantly different from Group 4 (*M* = 39.22, *SD* = 4.72) and Group 5 (*M* = 43.07, *SD* = 4.25), indicating that school counselors who strongly disagree with feeling a sense of belonging in the profession have lower **compassion satisfaction** than those who agree or strongly agree with feeling a sense of belonging. Likewise, the Tukey HSD test showed the **BO** mean score for Group 1 (*M* = 32.75, *SD* = 3.30) was significantly different from Group 4 (*M* = 23.70, *SD* = 4.67) and Group 5 (*M* = 20.80, *SD* = 4.86) indicating that those who strongly disagreed with feeling a sense of belonging had significantly higher average **burnout** than those who agree or strongly agree with feeling a sense of belonging in the profession. The Tukey HSD test to compare scores of **TEIQue** showed that the mean score for Group 2 (*M* = 4.74, *SD* = .59) differed significantly from Group 4 (*M* = 5.38, *SD* = .55) and Group 5 (*M* = 5.68, *SD* = .52), indicating that those who disagreed with feeling a sense of belonging had lower average **TEIQue** than those who agreed or strongly agreed with feeling a sense of belonging in the profession. Similarly, the Tukey HSD test indicated that the **SCSA** score for Group 2 (*M* = 25.25, *SD* = 4.39) differed significantly from Group 4 (*M* = 28.85, *SD* = 3.14) and Group 5 (*M* = 30.67, *SD* = 3.63), indicating that those who disagreed with feeling a sense of belonging had

lower average **SCSA** than those who agreed or strongly agreed with feeling a sense of belonging in the profession.

The final post-hoc analysis conducted was a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to assess the relationships between the variables of interest and the career characteristics of percent of non-counseling duties and school counselor-to-student ratio. No significant relationships were found between percent of non-counseling duties and the variables of interest, nor between school counselor-to-student ratio and the variables of interest. Results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Pearson Product-moment Correlations Between TEIQue, School Counselor Self-Advocacy (SCSA), Subscales of the ProQOL, Percent Non-Counseling Duties (%NCD) and School Counselor-to-Student Ratio (Ratio)

		CS	BO	STS	TEIQue	SCSA	%NCD	Ratio
%NCD								
	r	-.094	.115	-.023	-.052	-.130	-	.023
	Sig.	.198	.114	.754	.478	.073	-	.757
Ratio								
	r	-.032	.122	.026	-.034	.027	.023	-
	Sig	.657	.092	.720	.634	.709	.757	-

Summary

A total of 194 school counselors completed a survey in early 2020 containing a demographic questionnaire, the Professional Quality of Life Scale-Version 5, the Trait Emotional Intelligence-Short Form, and the School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were presented along with correlational analyses, regression analyses and post-hoc analyses of the data, resulting in rejection of all null hypotheses Findings revealed positive significant relationships between the independent variables, **TEIQue** and

SCSA, and **compassion satisfaction**; and negative significant relationships between the independent variables and the components of **compassion fatigue**, **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**. Regression analyses established that **TEIQue** and **SCSA** interact to significantly predict the components of **professional quality of life** and that **TEIQue** is a unique contributor to all three **ProQOL** subscales. A discussion of the results is presented below, as well as limitations of the study, implications for school counseling professionals and directions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the relationships and interactions between **trait emotional intelligence (TEIQue), school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)** and the subscales of **professional quality of life (ProQOL)**: **compassion satisfaction (CS) burnout (BO)** and **secondary traumatic stress (STS).** Results from this study contribute new information to the relatively small, but growing, body of research about school counseling. Specifically, this study sheds light on school counselors' **professional quality of life** and how **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** positively influence their **professional quality of life.** Perhaps most importantly, results from this study give direction to school counseling professionals on how to promote **compassion satisfaction** and reduce **compassion fatigue** (**BO** and **STS**) for practicing school counselors. The following pages discuss the results, implications, limitations, and future directions of this research.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Professional Quality of Life

Research questions one through three asked about the relationships between **TEIQue** and the components of **ProQOL**: **CS, BO** and **STS**. As hypothesized, **TEIQue** showed a strong positive relationship with **CS**, a strong negative relationship with **BO**, and a medium negative relationship with **STS**. All three correlations were statistically significant. These results were in agreement with previous research on **TEIQue** in other professions. Several researchers have found that as **TEIQue** increases, **BO** and job-related stress decreases (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016; Mikolajcza, Menil, & Luminet, 2007; Zeidner, 2012). Previous research has also indicated that higher **TEIQue** is positively related with both job satisfaction, job performance and work engagement (Akhtar et al., 2015; Oboyle et al., 2011); in other words, higher emotional intelligence correlates with more positive feelings about work (**compassion satisfaction)**.

Interestingly post-hoc analysis revealed that school counselors who have a strong sense of belonging to the field of school counseling also have higher **CS**, higher **TEIQue**, higher **SCSA** and lower levels of **BO** than those who have a low sense of belonging. These findings align with previous research that indicates peer consultation and supervision positively impact a school counselor's professional wellness (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Moyer, 2011). It is likely that school counselors who have a strong sense of belonging to the profession engage more with peers to share resources, discuss programs and lend emotional support. This kind of peer learning is ripe for emotional intelligence development as peers can recognize and empathize with emotional barriers that impede the success of interventions with students and advocacy efforts with administration.

School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy and Professional Quality of Life

As with **TEIQue**, this study was curious about how **school counselor self-advocacy (SCSA)** is related to **professional quality of life**. Again, as hypothesized, **SCSA** had a strong positive relationship with **CS**, a medium negative relationship with **BO** and a small negative relationship with **STS**. School counselors able to advocate and communicate their role to administration, teachers, and families are most likely to feel less role stress and thus more **compassion satisfaction** and less **compassion fatigue** (Anderson, 2015; Bryant & Constantine, 2006).

One finding to highlight is that school counselors in this study reported the lowest means for items on the School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire related to sharing data and appropriately following-up with the school administration. This could mean more training is needed for school counselors on not only presenting program data to communicate results and

needs of the school counseling program, but also on best practices for effectively following up with the school administration.

Promoting Compassion Satisfaction and Preventing Compassion Fatigue

Research questions seven through ten were the most exciting to investigate because they questions focused on the interaction between **TEIQue** and **SCSA** and whether these two variables could predict **CS** and **CF**. Results from correlational analyses confirmed that **TEIQue** and **SCSA** were strongly positively related which was expected given that **TEIQue** has been positively associated with leadership skills in other professions that could translate to **SCSA** skills in school counselors (Petrides et al., 2016). While there was a strong relationship between **TEIQue** and **SCSA**, they were not so highly correlated that the regression analysis determining their predictive nature for the subscales of ProQOL would be impeded by a violation of multicollinearity. Findings from regression analyses revealed that the two variables do, in fact, interact significantly to predict all three subscales (**CS**, **BO** and **STS),** answering research questions seven through ten. This was expected given that previous research has explained **TEIQue** and **SCSA** influence several individual and organizational factors that contribute to school counselor **ProQOL**.

The large amount of variance in **CS**, **BO** and **STS** accounted for by **TEIQue** and **SCSA** was somewhat unexpected. The two variables explained over half the variance in **CS**, nearly half of the variance of **BO**, and over 20% of the variance of **STS**. Further investigation found that while the interaction between the two variables significantly predicted the **ProQOL** subscales, only **TEIQue** uniquely contributed to all three subscales. Given the strong positive relationship between **TEIQue** and **SCSA**, these results imply that **trait emotional intelligence** has more influence over the individual and organizational factors that that contribute to **ProQOL** in school

counselors than **school counselor self-advocacy** efforts. In other words, these findings indicate that a school counselors' **ProQOL** is influenced more strongly by the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of the work, as opposed to the objective characteristics of the school and how the school counselor's role is defined.

This last point was underscored by the post-hoc analyses which failed to show any significant relationships between the **ProQOL** subscales and the organizational factors of school counselor-to-student ratio and assigned non-counseling duties. These findings were surprising as both ratio and non-counseling duties have been identified as major contributors to role stress and **burnout** in school counselors by several research teams (Bardoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Baker & Gerler, 2008; Cervoni et al., 2011). These findings may be due to limitations associated with the sample and instrumentation.

Limitations

As with any research, this study had several limitations. The first, and potentially the most significant, is the lack of diversity in the sample. This lack of diversity was apparent in not only the demographic make-up, such as Race/Ethnicity and gender, but also in the career characteristics of the participants. The sample for this study was largely comprised of school counselors working in smaller communities (< 50,000) and with relatively low school counselor-to-student ratios (< 1:400). Both Butler and Constantine (2005) and Mullen (2014) found that school counselors working in higher population settings tended to have higher **burnout** levels than those working in lower population settings. Likewise, school counselors who have higher school counselor-to-student ratio are more likely to have higher **compassion fatigue** and lower **compassion satisfaction** (Lee, Baker, Cho, Heckathorn, Holland, Newgent, …Yu, 2007). Consequently, it is possible that the participants in this study were able and willing to participate

in this research because they have lower work demands than the overall population of school counselors. It is also possible that school counselors who were not represented in the survey based on professional demographics did not engage in the research due to symptoms of compassion fatigue. Therefore, it is highly likely that the sample means for **CS**, **BO** and **STS** would be different if the sample had more equal representation of school counselors who work in large communities and/or who have higher school counselor-to-student ratios. This study focused on the impact of chronic and acute stressors of being a school counselor, and without more representation from school counselors working in high population areas and with large caseloads, the results may underestimate the levels of **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**.

The lack of significant relationship between school counselor-to-student ratio and non-counseling duties and **burnout** could also be explained by the fact that most previous research that has investigated these factors used the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI; Lee et al., 2007) to measure **burnout** as opposed to the **ProQOL**. The CBI was designed to specifically measure counselor **burnout** and is a more thorough measurement of the construct as opposed to the **ProQOL** which was designed to be used with any population and provides a more cursory measurement.

Additionally, the distribution of the sample across the United States is unknown, which again, leaves gaps in the data and limits inferences that can be made about the school counselor population in the United States. State policy around school counseling and the influence of state school counseling professional associations varies across the United States; if the sample was skewed in in favor of specific states or regions the resulting data only gives a slice of the picture instead of the whole. Unfortunately, data on which states the participants work in was not collected in this study. Although an effort to reach school counselors in each state was made by

directly emailing state association (SCAs) leaders with a request to disseminate the participation invitation, only a few leaders emailed back to confirm that they had sent the invitation onto their membership. Also regarding the sample, the sampling method largely relied on recruitment through professional school counseling associations and the resulting sample did not include many school counselors who do not belong to professional associations. Sense of belonging in the profession is an important factor in **professional quality of life,** and it is possible that school counselors who are not members of professional associations have differing levels of **compassion satisfaction** and **compassion fatigue** as compared with those who belong to ASCA and/or their SCA due to potential lack of belonging in the professional community.

Another limitation of this research had to do with the timing of participant recruitment and the cross-sectional survey design. Participants were recruited January through February and only completed the survey instruments once. There have been no studies that have reported on stress levels for school counselors throughout the school year, therefore, it is possible that the levels of **CS** and **CF** could be vastly different if assessed at different points in the school year than in the January/February timeframe of this study.

Finally, while **TEIQue** and **SCSA** accounted for much of the variance in the **ProQOL** subscales, the remainder of the variance was unaccounted for by the individual and career demographic data collected. Although this study's findings indicated that school counselors' **professional quality of life** is influenced by **TEIQue** and **SCSA**, it is unknown whether these variables can be influenced by intervention in the school counselor population. This, along with other future research directions are discussed below.

Future Directions

Previous research has shown improvements in **TEIQue** through psychoeducational groups, as well as in adult learner classrooms (Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, & Hansenne, 2009; Pool, & Qualter 2012) However, Kotsou and colleagues (2019) caution that while emotional intelligence can be improved through intervention, there is a lack of transparency in the literature about the interventions used to increase emotional intelligence. Further research is needed on whether or not **TEIQue** can be improved in school counselors specifically, as well as on which educational interventions are the most effective in improving emotional intelligence in adults. Much more research is needed on **school counselor self-advocacy,** particularly, the development of self-advocacy across the work-life span, including findings that determine the efficacy of different modalities of learning (i.e. self-directed learning, group experiential learning) for improving **SCSA** across the work-life span.

As outlined previously, **TEIQue** and **SCSA** accounted for much of the variance in the **ProQOL** subscales; however the remainder of the variance was unaccounted for by the individual or career demographic data collected. Research from other fields on **compassion fatigue** has identified risk and protective factors that were not evaluated in this study, namely, personal trauma history, self-care practices and mindfulness (Brown, Ong, Mathers, & Decker, 2017; Thompson, Amatea, & Thompson, 2014; Turgoose & Maddox, 2017). Future research on school counselors' **ProQOL** could examine the contributions of personal trauma history, self-care practices, and mindfulness in mitigating **compassion fatigue** and promoting **compassion satisfaction**.

Another direction for future research is to focus on school counselors who work in high population areas. These counselors were underrepresented in this sample and have been underrepresented in other school counseling research. Not only do we need to have a better

understanding of these school counselors' **ProQOL**, we also need a clearer picture of how to engage these professionals in research.

Implications

Findings from this study have implications for professional school counselors, school administrators, school counselor supervisors, and counselor educators. Practicing school counselors, school counseling supervisors and school administrators can incorporate the free self-score **ProQOL** measure to aid in their professional development throughout the school year. Results from the self-score **ProQOL** can then be individually assessed by the school counselor, and/or, if they are comfortable disclosing results these could be disccused with peers, supervisors and/or administrators to guide professional development for school counselor. Findings from this study imply that professional development targeted to increase **TEIQue** and **SCSA** will improve overall **professional quality of life**; however, should the self-score assessment indicate moderate to high **BO** and/or **STS**, seeking out professional development to improve **TEIQue** would be more beneficial. In particular, **TEIQue** professional development that utilizes a peer group model may be especially effective as it may also improve school counselors' sense of belonging in the profession, in addition to **TEIQue** and **SCSA**. However, due to the lack of evidence-based interventions that specifically focus on **TEIQue** or **SCSA**, school counseling professionals may improve their **ProQOL** through evidence-based trainings focused on developing professional resilience and mindfulness practices.

Counselor educators can build career sustainability in counselors-in-training (CITs) by ensuring that emotional intelligence development is being addressed and developed throughout the graduate program. This can be accomplished through classes designed to increase emotional intelligence and/or as lessons in both academic and skill courses to reinforce learning throughout

the program. An example would be an introductory skill course where the branches of emotional intelligence are taught to help deepen the CITs' understanding and ability in basic skills such as feeling reflections and paraphrasing (among others). This could look like the instructor engaging students in discussion about how their own feelings influence the intervention, how they were able to identify the feeling in their client/student, and how they might use this emotional information to move the session forward. To reinforce emotional intelligence learning in content and skills courses, instructors could include "emotional check-ins" in their lessons. For example, in a counseling youth and adolescents course, school counseling students may learn about different curriculum and interventions for social/emotional learning; instructors could build in experiential learning that asks CITs to practice teaching the social/emotional curriculum to each other with other CITs engaging in the lesson as if they were K-12 students. Afterwards, the counselor educator could lead the students in a discussion about how and why this curriculum improves emotional intelligence and what would need to be different in a lesson for adult learners. Another example of how reinforcement of emotional learning could happen in content courses is through facilitation of student check-ins with their emotions periodically in class, particularly after emotionally-charged class discussions like those surrounding working with child abuse and neglect, or professional ethics debates. Additionally, counselor educators working primarily with school counseling CITs who teach **school counselor self-advocacy** skills could design these lessons to focus on advocating for the school counselor role through data presented to administration and best practices for effectively following-up with the principal throughout the school year.

In skills courses such as practicum and internship, as well as supervision post-graduate school, supervisors can improve their school counseling supervisees' **ProQOL** outlook by

focusing on emotional intelligence development in their supervision sessions. This could look like a supervisor asking their supervisee to explore the feelings the supervisee had while working with a student issue, identifying the feelings of the student during the intervention, and by having the supervisee critically think about how they used information gathered from their own and their student's emotions to guide the interventions and treatment plan for the student issue.

Summary

The findings of this study contribute novel knowledge to the growing body of research on school counselors and their **professional quality of life**. School counselors' effectiveness in their work is directly related to their levels of **compassion fatigue** and **compassion satisfaction**. Results from this study indicated that both **trait emotional intelligence** and **school counselor self-advocacy** are significantly related to the components of **ProQOL**: **compassion satisfaction** and **compassion fatigue** (**burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**). Furthermore, the results revealed that **TEIQue** and **SCSA** interact to predict all three subscales of the **ProQOL** and that both are significant unique contributors to **compassion satisfaction**, while only **TEIQue** is a significant unique contributor to the components of **compassion fatigue**: **burnout** and **secondary traumatic stress**.

Although limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting the results of this study, the findings provide guidance for preventing **compassion fatigue** and promoting **compassion satisfaction** in school counselors. Results also give direction to counselor education faculty and others providing training and professional development for school counselors. In summary, improving school counselors' emotional intelligence will protect from **compassion fatigue** and promote **compassion satisfaction** improving their overall **professional quality of life,** sustaining them in their work and retaining them in the profession.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information

1. Are you currently employed as a school counselor in a K-12 setting in the USA?
    a. Yes
    b. No
2. What is your gender?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
3. Which racial and/or ethnic category(ies) do you identify with? Select all that apply.
    a. American Indian or Alaska Native
    b. Asian
    c. Black or African American
    d. Hispanic or LatinX
    e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    f. White
    g. Prefer not to disclose
4. What is your age?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
5. Is there anything else you would like to share about your identity that is relevant to your work as a school counselor?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
6. How many years have you been employed as a school counselor?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
7. How long have you been a school counselor at your current school?

a. OPEN RESPONSE

8. Which level do you work with currently?
    a. Elementary
    b. Middle/Junior High
    c. High School
    d. K-8
    e. K-12
    f. Other, please specify _____
9. What is your student-to-school counselor ratio in your current position?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
10. How many school counselors are in your school, including yourself?
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
11. Please estimate the population of the town/city your school is in.
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
12. Please estimate the percentage of your work week that is spent on non-counseling duties. Non-counseling duties could include testing coordination, substituting for teachers, lunchroom monitoring etc.
    a. OPEN RESPONSE
13. How much do you agree with the following: I have the necessary resources to meet the demands of my work
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Somewhat agree
    c. Neither agree nor disagree

d. Somewhat disagree

e. Strongly disagree

14. Are you a member of a professional school counseling association?

    a. Yes

    b. No

15. How much do you agree with the following: I feel a sense of belonging in my work as a school counselor?

    a. Strongly agree

    b. Somewhat agree

    c. Neither agree nor disagree

    d. Somewhat disagree

    e. Strongly disagree

Appendix B

Professional Quality of Life – Version 5 (ProQoL-5; Stamm, 2009)

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Very Often 5
1. I am happy.					
2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help].					
3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people.					
4. I feel connected to others.					
5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.					
6. I feel invigorated after working with those I [help].					
7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a [helper].					
8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I [help].					
9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I [help]					
10. I feel trapped by my job as a [helper].					
11. Because of my [helping], I have felt "on edge" about various things.					
12. I like my work as a [helper].					
13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic					

experiences of the people I [help].					
14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have [helped].					
15. I have beliefs that sustain me.					
16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with [helping] techniques and protocols					
17. I am the person I always wanted to be.					
18. My work makes me feel satisfied.					
19. I feel worn out because of my work as a [helper].					
20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I [help] and how I could help them.					
21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.					
22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.					
23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [help].					
24. I am proud of what I can do to [help].					
25. As a result of my [helping], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.					
26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.					
27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [helper].					
28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims					

29. I am a very caring person.					
30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.					

Appendix C

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides 2009)

Instructions: Please answer each statement below by putting a circle around the number that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with that statement. Do not think too long about the exact meaning of the statements. Work quickly and try to answer as accurately as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from 'Completely Disagree' (number 1) to 'Completely Agree' (number 7).

1 . . . . . 2 . . . . . 3 . . . . . 4 . . . . . 5 . . . . . 6 7
Completely Disagree **Completely Agree**

1. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I often find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I generally don't find life enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can deal effectively with people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I tend to change my mind frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Many times, I can't figure out what emotion I'm feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I often pause and think about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. I tend to “back down” even if I know I’m right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I don’t seem to have any power at all over other people’s feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Generally, I’m able to adapt to new environments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Others admire me for being relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D

The School Counselor School Counselor Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SCSAQ; Clemens, Shipp & Kimbel, 2011)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that you use these skills to advocate for your role as a counselor.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4
1. I maintain positive working relationships with professionals in the school.				
2. I effectively communicate my perspective on my role to my principal.				
3. I "choose my battles" when advocating for my role as a school counselor.				
4. I listen to my principal's perspective on my role as a school counselor.				
5. I use problem-solving skills to find solutions to role challenges.				
6. I present information clearly about my role as a school counselor to my principal.				
7. I share data with my principal to support or to make changes to my role as a school counselor.				
8. I follow up appropriately with my principal about my role as a school counselor.				
9. I cope effectively with challenges to my role as a school counselor.				